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Buckley on Goodman

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I don't mind Paul Goodman as much as most people do, but really he doesn't have any right to bore me to death, even when reviewing my own book. I—we—mind him most when he is being apodictic on matters that simply don't lend themselves to that kind of treatment. In his endless review of my comparatively short book, *The Unmaking of a Mayor*, he was at his worst, in which he excels. And, almost always, for the same kind of reason; his arbitrary insistence that things are as he says they are and should be called as he says they should be called from which it *follows*, etc., etc., (which, in logic, it does indeed, except that most writers only ask you to accept what follows from an *assumption*, Goodman's overarching assumption being quite simply that in all matters he is correct).

A few examples. "At this juncture"—Election Time, 1965—"both intellectuals and decent persons of ordinary common sense wanted something that was not Goldwater or Johnson." Now that really is a silly remark, for such reasons as 1) the election of John Lindsay, by a hairsbreadth plurality, had nothing discernible to do with Lyndon Johnson, and nothing to do with intellectuals and decent persons. There were pro-Johnsonites and

(Continued on page 542)

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GOD

One of the difficulties with publishing a weekly magazine is that the larger issues sometimes go unnoticed, or are at least neglected. Partially this is a result of having to confront, week in and week out, very pressing issues of immediate concern. Partially it is the result of space limitations; it is not easy, even for the best writers, to deal with broad and difficult topics in two or three pages. This bothers us, and it often bothers many of our writers. Something, we felt, had to be done. This special issue, the first in a series of what will be known as "The Commonweal Papers," is one response to the problem. In size, it is one of the largest issues we have ever published. In addition, the individual articles are considerably longer than usual. The net result is an issue the size of a small book; and it does more, we believe, than merely scratch the surface of an immensely complicated topic.

But why did we choose the topic of "God" as the first of "The Commonweal Papers"? We did so because it has rapidly become the most central problem in the Church and, so far, the least explored. This could hardly have been predicted, even a couple of years ago. Despite all the problems taken up by the Council Fathers at Vatican II, the problem of God was not among them. It was barely even suggested as a topic by the most outspoken progressive reformers. The main issue, it was thought, was "pastoral"—making the Church as an institution a freer, more open, more progressive, more ecumenical community. That was and remains a crucial goal, but it becomes daily all the more clear that to undertake significant reform is to be driven back to the most basic premises of the Christian life. And the most basic premise of all is the existence and nature of God, and man's attempt to grapple with the meaning of God for human and Church life.

The articles published in this issue come face to face with that most basic premise. They go well beyond the by now boring question of whether God is dead. In many respects, they go beyond what Catholics are accustomed to thinking of as "orthodox" and "traditional." But then, if God lives, how are we to worship him, to think of him, to speak of him, in an age very different from earlier eras? This issue is meant as an attempt to answer that question.

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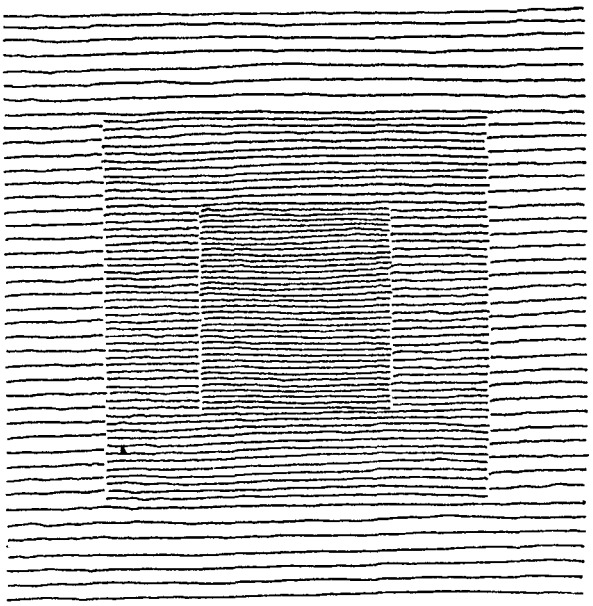

The religious question today is not whether there is revealed data, but whether there is a God who reveals. A God who once spoke but now speaks no more is not only uninteresting but unintelligible. Possibly this is a fault of our era . . . but only possibly.

THE GOD OF REVELATION

GABRIEL MORAN

At the beginning of his talk at the St. Xavier symposium last Spring, Edward Schillebeeckx remarked that a Catholic answer has not yet been given to modernism. The modernist movement was an attempt to rethink the foundations of Catholic doctrine in a way that would take more account of historical development and the conscious subject. Unfortunately, the movement did not have the tools to carry out its project. The Church's magisterium, realizing that this could not lead to a right answer, simply closed the door to further development in that direction. The step which may have been necessary at that time did not solve the problem; it only covered it up momentarily.

One might go beyond the modernist movement and say that orthodox Catholic tradition has never adequately answered a constantly recurring heresy. The frequency of this heresy is indicative of the legitimate demand implicit in the error. Eventually, orthodoxy must face this issue and deal with it in an adequate way. What I refer to is the existence throughout the centuries of countless sects of people who wished to "experience" God or at least to search for a God who would speak in their lives. In its classical form, this is the heresy of the third age, the age of the Spirit, in which institutional forms will fall away and each individual will be immersed in the Spirit.

This demand is not solely an ancient or a medieval problem. One need not go beyond the limits of any large city in the United States to find religious sects whose appeal is a revelation of the Spirit. More important than these small groups, however, is the search by millions of people for some kind of experience in their lives that would be ultimately satisfying or meaningful. In the book of Jeremiah, the king Zedekiah asked the prophet: "Is there any word from the Lord?" This question has never entirely disappeared. Moreover, what had been implicit in that question has come more to the forefront in our day: "Is there any word from the Lord *for us*?"

It is possible to dismiss this demand of a present revelatory experience as due to a lack of sophistication on the part of the masses. Theologians and bishops have often done just that. Of course, religious experience is not altogether outlawed in Catholicism. As a matter of fact, the liturgy is currently being revamped to encourage it. The only trouble with this concession to fleshly, temporal, social man is that his experience is not taken with any ultimate seriousness. It is measured against "revealed data" that God has bestowed upon the Church. Because religious experience must therefore be an essentially brainless affair, it is exposed to manipulative techniques that destroy its significance.

It is quite acceptable for one to say that in the liturgy we meet God or that God acts in human history. But it would be considered rather dangerous to say that God reveals himself in personal experience today. One must qualify that statement by adding that strictly speaking the divine public revelation ended with the death of the last apostle. Whatever strange happenings go on in the world and whatever playing with liturgy occurs in the church, the real revelation of God is contained in the carefully preserved truths. Thus, no one gets upset by a writer saying that God speaks to us in the liturgy because almost no one believes this. For to take the phrase seriously would require a revolution in thinking

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about revelation that has not occurred in the Catholic Church.

The religious question today is not whether there is revealed data but whether there is a God who reveals. A God who once spoke but now speaks no more is not only uninteresting but unintelligible. Possibly this is a fault of our contemporary era. It may be an error traceable to the narrowness of men who identify the "meaningful with the instantaneously incandescent" (Sittler). The Christian may perhaps judge as egocentric and blasphemous the remark of Rousseau, that if God wanted to talk to Jean-Jacques then why did he go speak to Moses. Yet the question is not wholly irrelevant.

These questions have answers, of course, that have been formulated in well-worn phrases. But even if the answers are the right ones, each person who repeats them must think out his own conclusions or risk clouding the issue with meaningless words. It is somewhat painful to read the exchanges that took place between the modernist George Tyrrell and his more orthodox opponents. On the part of some of these people it did not take great courage or intelligence to repeat traditional formulas. That kind of stance is not very dangerous, but neither is it very helpful for the Church's task of coming to understand her mission in the world.

Catholic theology in recent centuries presupposed that there were two rather distinct ways to know about God. God can be known by reason and by revelation. From the universe a right thinking man can read off God's existence. From the revealed data in the Scriptures and in Tradition, one can know things about God's character. The basic assumption was that Christianity possessed a revelation and from this it could know about God.

During the past century, under the pressure of critical examination, this picture was gradually altered. The number of revealed truths was carefully honed down, the interplay of reason and revelation was more subtly worked out, and the revealed truths of Scripture and Tradition were squeezed into some kind of unity. The fundamental attitude, however, has not greatly changed: somewhere, somehow, in some number, the Church has revealed truths about God. But it must be admitted that the tactic of shrinkage has not really helped; nor would the lopping off of a few more doctrines improve conditions. What many men find inconceivable is the assumption that there are any truths that are unquestionable and are a norm to which men are to submit their freedom of inquiry. Whether there are two or twenty-two hundred of these revealed truths is not the paramount issue.

An English writer, F. Gerald Downing, recently published a book entitled, *Has Christianity a Revelation?* Partly on the basis of his empiricist's learnings and partly on the basis of the Bible, Downing seems to think that the answer should be in the negative. Although it would be for different reasons, I think that I would agree with his conclusion. Christianity does not *have* a revelation because this would presuppose that revelation is something men might have or possess. Instead, Christianity might *be* a revelation or at least a community of people becoming aware of a God who is revealing, a God who is always in front of man and inviting him forward. Our language predisposes us to think of revelation as an object. It is easy to move from speaking of the truths through which God reveals to the truths which God has revealed. The difference in phraseology is slight, but the difference in resulting attitudes is enormous.

It is highly ambiguous to speak of faith as a response to revelation. It would be better to speak of faith as an attitude within the revelational process or an act directed to the God who is revealing. Traditional Catholic teaching has asserted that faith terminates not in the proposition but in the reality, not in the truths but in the person. What has not been obvious in this teaching is that a present act of believing must be correlated with a present act of revealing. It is not sufficient to keep saying that biblical faith is more a verb than a noun. Faith still ends up as a body of truths and this happens inevitably because revelation is still assumed to be something that the Church possesses rather than what God is now doing.

Some people may protest that this view of revelation has been recovered in recent years. It is true that it is now often said that revelation is an "event" as well as a truth, a happening in history as well as the prophetic interpretation. This insight provided by contemporary exegesis represents a great advance in our understanding of revelation. It is seldom recognized, however, what this biblical teaching implies. If one really wishes to say that revelation is an event, then one must say that revelation exists today as a present event. A happening is happening only when it is happening. This is the crucial issue that has not been faced in all radicalness even in much writing that appears to take a radical approach.

The Council's Work

The Constitution on Divine Revelation represents an excellent statement on scriptural research into the question of revelation. The approved Constitution is an immeasurably better document than the one that was first presented to the Council in 1962. Yet it does not pose, let alone answer, the question of God's revelation happening in the contemporary world. Given the present shape of Catholic theology, this limitation was probably both wise and necessary. The Constitution on Divine Revelation can be of great help so long as we remember that it is as much a starting point as it is a conclusion.

The Second Vatican Council did work with wider and deeper notions of revelation. Intimations of this are found in the Constitution on the Church, the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, the Decree on Ecumenism, and the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions. These docu-

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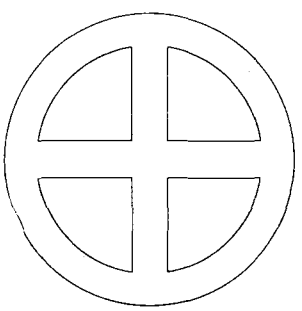
ments are filled with marvelous insights for the Catholic trying to live his faith in the world of today. These insights, however, rest upon a more developed notion of revelation than that which has yet surfaced. There is nothing surprising or deceitful in the movement from pastoral concern to theological depth. What would be unfortunate would be to stop with the practical, pastoral statements. The result would be that in no time at all the assertions would be trivialized into pious sayings that would not have to be taken too strictly.

I would cite as an example here the question of Christian-Jewish relations. This example is so decisive that it is more than an example; it is the index of whether we understand the whole present issue in relation to our past and future.

At the present time, many Catholics and Jews are working diligently to break down some of the barriers that have been constructed over the centuries. A first stage of ordinary social relationships inevitably leads to the raising of theological questions. As Catholics have recovered a greater appreciation of the Old Testament they have felt a growing bond with the people of Israel. The increased knowledge of the Old Testament has undoubtedly been a great help to the Catholic in encountering Judaism.



The ironic and sometimes tragic thing, however, is that the more the Catholic concentrates on the Old Testament, the more this can strain relations with the contemporary Jew. For the stress upon old as opposed to new is a source of continuing irritation. The Jew has no *Old* Testament. He does have a Hebrew Scripture. He also has a post-biblical history with which most Catholics are not very familiar. The questions which rabbis repeatedly pose to Catholic audiences today is not what do you think of the Old Testament, but what do you think of contemporary Jewish people.

The Catholic has difficulties in understanding contemporary Judaism because of many historical and social factors. But beneath the other problems there is a continuing theological inadequacy on the part of Catholicism. Because revelation is conceived to be something that came in the past and stopped, then the Old Testament cannot be anything but old. Despite all our contrary pleas, the Old Testament becomes that part of revelation that was supplanted or at least completed by the New Testament. It was once the revealing God at work but now it has been fulfilled. In this conception the Jewish people were once the bearers of revelation, but now they are an incongruous remnant. This line of thinking is very strong among Catholics despite the insistence of St. Paul (Rom. II) and Vatican II that God has not revoked the promises to his people. Unless one were to interpret this in a collectivistic sense, this can only mean that Jews retain a special mission in the revealing of God today.

The problem in saying this is that the Catholic cannot believe that God is still revealing himself to the Jewish people because the Catholic does not believe that God is revealing himself to anybody. Insofar as Catholics believe that revelation was sealed and delivered in the New Testament, there is no theological reason for a special study of post-biblical Judaism. If, on the other hand, God is still working in the world and revealing himself to men, it becomes imperative for the Christian to be attentive to the mission of Judaism. When Christian and Jew take each other's position with theological seriousness they can search together for the God in whom they both believe, the one who is glimpsed under different aspects in the lives of Jews and Christians. In such an undertaking the Christian will have to ask himself with candor where the most striking witness to the suffering servant of Yahweh has been found in the twentieth century.

The point of this discussion is that Catholics can hardly begin to look for God in the lives of all men if they do not even have a meaningful theology of Judaism. Obviously, no Catholic theology is going to be wholly acceptable to the Jew. This is not what is demanded. What is required is a developed theological position that will aid Catholic self-understanding and at the same time reveal the urgent need for dialogue. It is useless to encourage dialogue unless there is the prior conviction that one can learn from the other. So long as the Catholic believes that a perfected revelation has been delivered into his possession, then he will not look to the contemporary Jew for meaningful theological exchange.

One of the underlying difficulties here is the paradoxical notion of a chosen people. Running throughout the Scriptures is the assumption that God chooses particular people and particular moments of time. This idea of choice can be easily misinterpreted. The peculiar character of God's choice is that in choosing one he includes rather than excludes all the others. This is so because of the nature of the choice which is a call to serve and not to dominate the others. The chosen one has not merited some special gift; rather, something inexplicable happens in his life, something not so much for himself as for the other. The chosen ones are continually reminded by the prophet that they are not the good people who possess God as opposed to all other people who are cut off from God.

If God was to meet the real existing man, he had to

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deal with the particular man who lives moment by moment with his brothers. The religious faiths that men can live by are necessarily particular and concrete. It must be especially insisted upon today that particular religious faiths are not less than the general ideals that can be abstracted from them. The revelation of God is not a set of lofty ideals for men to conform their lives to.

The problem of Christian and Jewish faiths is not that they are particular and limited, but that they interpret particularity in an exclusive or negative way. Rightly understood, Judaism and Christianity need not negate any human value because their claim is not to possess all truth but to be receptive to all truth. Claiming to be the chosen of God does not necessitate the belief that God is not revealing himself among all men. The exact contrary is true. The Jew and Christian must recognize that God reveals himself to all men and that no man and no institution possesses the whole truth. Precisely by not trying to dominate with the truth, by not claiming to possess all truth already, the Jew and Christian can be points around which the unification of truth can occur. This position is not one of bland indifference or utter relativism. The Catholic can be tolerant of another's beliefs because he is passionately committed to his own truth.

Belief in a chosen people includes, therefore, a belief that God is with all people. Likewise, belief in chosen moments of time means that God is revealing himself in every moment of time. It cannot be denied that there have been crucial moments of the past that influence the present. If one wishes to understand the present, he cannot do so except through the past and future. Nevertheless, if one wishes to begin looking for a God of revelation, one simply cannot overemphasize the present. It is only there that God can be God for us.

Given the receptiveness and search by the believer, it may be asked whether any special knowledge of God can be pointed to as achieved by revelation. The Christian claims that he has been found by another so that a new demand is made upon his life and a distinctive quality is to be found in his activity. As to the question of knowing more things about God, the Christian would have to qualify his answer. There are not a certain number of things that one can know of God by reason and an additional number that are known by revelation. If the word "knowledge" connotes the gathering in of objective data and the quantitative increase of facts about the world, then God's revelation cannot be identified with knowledge. God does not compete with finite objects for man's attention; he does not fit into our schema of known things.

On the other hand, if "knowing" can designate man's primordial receptiveness to being and man's thrust forward to the fullness of life, then the Christian would claim that he knows and is known by God. Man's quest for some ultimate meaning has been met by God's loving gift of himself. This communion at the most intimate level of man's life has found objective historical expression in all human life. It has been expressed in a privileged way in the history of the Jewish people, in the history of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the lives of those who try to follow him in the way of God. In all human experiences this God is to be sought although some of the expressions within a continuing tradition have a special role in the listening to God. The professions of faith of the community are not truths revealed by God but they are of special importance in helping to unveil the God who reveals himself in all human life. Stories, poetry, or rituals may achieve this result more effectively than a logically constructed system of abstract truths.

Creating Idols

The danger to which faith is continually exposed is that God will no longer be sought but that his revelation will be identified with something finite. The distinctive character of Judaic-Christian revelation is that God has left us no revelation. He is himself still here. The most subtle enemy of faith and revelation, Bonhoeffer and Barth have recently taught us, is religion. In this context, religion would be the supposition that revealed truths are a substitute for a revealing God. When such a notion of revelation gains ascendancy, the role of the community leader becomes that of dispenser of revealed truths. The rest of the community is then under pressure to accept these truths and conform to them. Not only is this notion of revealed truth inhibitive of personal faith and mature freedom, it is creative of an idolatrous situation. For a revealed truth in Christianity can be nothing but an idol. God reveals and conceals himself in the naming of every truth. Every human formulation testifies to its own inadequacy and forbids the equation of any doctrine with revelation.

Nothing of itself is divine. Even the greatest works of man cannot be guaranteed to reveal God. Man is not God; that is not the whole truth but it is an important truth that man must struggle to retain. To preserve the transcendence of God it is necessary to insist just as strongly on a complementary truth. God does not depend upon man but he is freely in our history, concerned with each event in human life. He is not an abstract God above the heavens but a God who is for us. Some men try to protect the true God by keeping him removed from the contamination of history. In pushing God out beyond man's power of description, they succeed only in introducing a substitute god to whom men can be related. Whoever tries to save God from involvement in present history usually ends by idolizing elements of past human history.

God's utter sovereignty is therefore inseparable from his intense concern with man's history. There must be on our part a readiness *always* to look for God in historical

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happenings but *never* to equate our human judgment of the event with the divine will. This constant tension and striving forward requires the strictest self-criticism. The clearer became God's intention in the demands laid upon man, the more difficult it became to ascertain the next historical step in realizing his will for man. The closer God drew, the less conceptualizable he became.

Christianity is not or should not be the reversal of this fundamental belief of Judaism. It would be a wrong impression to think that in Jesus the veils were taken away and God became known. It is incorrect to assume that Christians should not be in doubt because God himself has told us in plain language what to believe and what to do. Not only is this notion of divine revelation not the consequence of the Incarnation; it is a direct denial of it. The Word became flesh, the Word did not do away with flesh. God did not become obvious and comprehensible in Christ. He became more confusing or at least more paradoxical; that is, we are driven to re-examine our most basic presuppositions of what God should be like. In Christ the contrast of good with evil is put into sharpest focus. At the same time we are cautioned that the line of demarcation does not run between creator and creature, nor between creature and creature, but between the good and the bad in each man's heart.

Christ does not supply any ready-made answers for the questions of contemporary men. His life is proposed as an answer to the question which man's being presupposes. He gives no revealed doctrines about God nor any revealed precepts for leading a proper life. He does suggest the examples and he himself becomes the example for other human beings to live before God. Whatever Christ was, he was not just a very, very good man who left some idealistic teachings to be followed. He was at the least a strange and incomprehensible character in whom a unique call to other men occurs.

The last glimmering hopes of man for sacred messages and divine institutions were extinguished with Christ. What had been implicit has now become an unavoidable fact, namely, that man is the high point of creation and that there are no messages or truths above him. If God is to be sought, it can only be in human life. God can be for man only as man takes up his own responsibility and frees himself from every form of slavery.

The God of revelation is the one who can be reached only by belief. In belief one stakes his life on a person rather than on submission to the bounded truths of nature. To believe is to be in restless search for the one who guarantees that it is not absurd to seek. The belief is restless but it is also serene to the extent that one knows a presence and an absence that cannot be lost. In knowing God as present, the believer is confident of this truth for a presence of love is simply a positive reality that asserts itself. No argument brings about a presence and no argument can take it away. As to the experience of God's absence, the believer is painfully aware of this fact but knows too that absence is significant only in contrast to presence.

The undeniable reality of evil and suffering is the most inexplicable fact that the believer must live with. He knows that the affirmation of God is no solution to the problem of evil, but neither is the denial of God. The struggles and sufferings that men are involved in surely must have some seriousness and meaning. To try to maintain the opposite and merely take a stand against the absurdity of life is still to affirm some value of heroism and to approve the taking of a stand on something ultimate.

The Supreme Paradox

For those who think that Christianity gives answers of naive optimism, it might be emphasized that it is Christianity which maintains that there is no final solution except in death. What is more, death in Christianity is not of body alone as distinct from soul nor is it simply escape from life. Death is the shattering apart of man's personal existence in which he becomes receptive to the sufferings of all men. Only he who is willing to die daily, only he who is willing to lay down his life for his brother is a follower of Jesus to the revelation of God. This cannot be assumed of everyone who calls himself Christian; it can be attributed to every man who believes that love is stronger than hatred and death and who is willing to back that belief with his life. Here is the supreme paradox for the Christian believer: he must believe that the man who is denying God with his lips may have more truly found God than the believer who is confessing God and working in his name.

There is no way out for the believer in a revealing God. He must continue to strive forward after God although he knows that his strivings will of themselves never attain to God. Other men demand: Where is your God? Can you not at least give us a working definition of him? The believer will be tempted to change the One Who Cometh into the truths that are or the things that have been handed down. To fall into this trap would be to close off history and introduce a god above man. Every impatient attempt to make God appear results in a false god that competes with human freedom. The God who reveals himself is the one who lets himself appear, choosing the ways and the times. He is the one who keeps open the future so that man may become more himself.

Thus man is allowed to live his life with its joys and sorrows, its ups and downs; he is not to cling convulsively to life nor frivolously toss it aside. The revealing God who draws near is the judge, the hunter, the lover. Either to accept this God or to try to build still another god is the choice man is always faced with. God is not the answer to any human problems but he is the demand for an answer and the promise that it is not useless to seek a better world.

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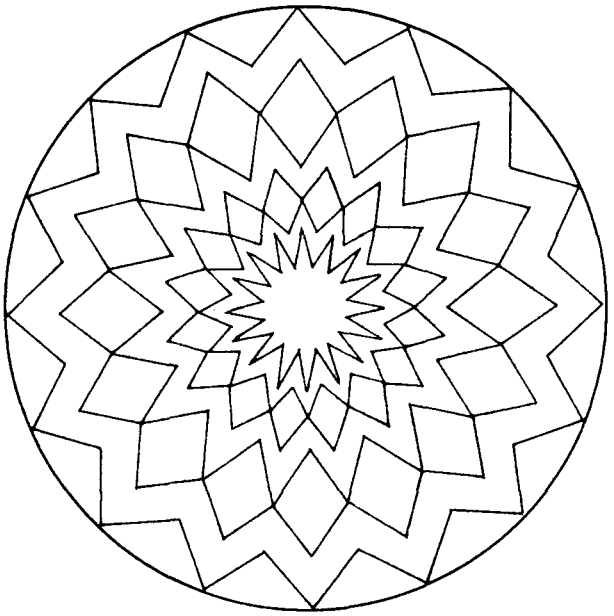

The force of Pascal's discovery remains, that the God of the philosophers is no God of Christians. He is not such a God simply because he is a God who has appeared in the experience of a people, and there has never been a people of philosophers.

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

BRUCE VAWTER

What is valid about the death-of-God theology, if this is to use the right word, is of course that the God of theology is what we make him. This has always been true, as true in the theology of Chalcedon or Augsburg or Vatican II as in the mythologies of Canaan or Mesopotamia or Phrygia, which fashioned very satisfactory gods for themselves out of an experience of life that some men found adequate and real. To paraphrase St. Thomas, when we name God we speak our experience, our understanding of man and of ourselves (S.T., I, xiii, 1). This is only to say what has been said many times before and since—though by some it is now being said as for the first time—that a good theology must begin as a good anthropology. Therefore, while one may question the judgment on which an analysis of the human condition leads to the conclusion that contemporary man stands in no need of redemption but only of reconciliation with his fellows, he should not fault the logic by which in this view of man God is proclaimed dead. With Schubert Ogden he may agree that it is wildly implausible to claim that this can ever become a genuine theology of Christian faith, but that is another question entirely.

To take up that other question, I begin, as I suppose I can, with the assumption that a genuine theology of Christian faith will be a biblical theology (though not, obviously, merely a theology of the Bible). Such a theology I cannot conceive if it does not have at its heart the true God whom the Israel of the Bible claimed to worship—that is, the God who had *proved* himself true, trustworthy, reliable, in Israel's historical experience, who conformed to the realities of life as Israel knew them. When Israel branded the gods of the Gentiles "lies," it was not necessarily to deny their existence; a theoretical monotheism was of late development in its thought and really has little to do with the Bible. Rather, it was meant that such gods were unreliable, unsuitable for faith and trust, since they did not correspond to the realities.

The superior cultures on which Israel thus sat in judgment, and which admittedly it never made much effort to understand, would have regarded the Israelite attitude as one of incredible arrogance. As Mircea Eliade, the Frankforts, and many other scholars have shown most convincingly in their studies of mythopoeic thought, the mythological religions of Mesopotamia and Egypt, the twin foci of all that was civilized in the ancient world, were highly serious and pragmatically successful attempts to come to grips with life's deepest problems and man's most earnest questionings. They were, before their time, the scholastic syntheses of the Middle Ages or of nineteenth century scientism, in which everything in a closed universe was identified and put in its place where it harmonized with everything else. The mythological world-view was an organized, hierarchical structure of great complexity which on its premises made admirable sense and reflected faithfully the mentality of its age just as surely as Peter Lombard did that of the semi-mythical Christian world of the age of faith. It is in keeping that the art of such otherwise alien cultures should so often show striking parallels, and that the Sumerian organization of temple and city should resemble nothing so much as a medieval abbey town.

It was doubtless the very consistency of the mythological religions that first roused Israel's mistrust. The way that Israel had gone had given it an experience that

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did not coincide with these neat, tidy, pat answers to life's problems. The record of that experience is the Old Testament, which because of it is rather different from any other literature of man. Despite careless or deliberately sensationalist titles like "the Babylonian Job" or "the Egyptian Koheleth," in point of fact there is nothing in the literatures of the great nature religions of antiquity that really resembles Job or Ecclesiastes. There was hardly room there for these images of a God who does the unexpected, who is totally unpredictable, who is Raymond Nogar's "Lord of the Absurd."

It was not the way of mythology only that Israel renounced because of its experience. As Joseph Ratzinger has brought out in a recent study, in his journey beyond myth man generally took (with some deviations at times) one of three paths: that of mysticism, of monotheism, or of philosophical enlightenment. The last re-integrated him in nature in just the way the old myths had done, but now without the gods, who were dispensable. This is the great liberation of human thought that is sometimes ascribed to the pre-Socratic Thales of Miletus. The way of mysticism was that of the great religious personalities, whose names remain as exemplars to other men of the ultimate meanings that can be discovered within their own selves. As the early church fathers already recognized, and as we recognize better from a study of comparative religions they had not made, biblical religion produced no great religious personalities of this kind, no Buddha, no Confucius, no Lao-tse. Biblical monotheism took the path neither of nature nor of that inward turning that seeks absorption in the All, but of faith in a received word.

We don't disparage other men in the other ways in which they seek meanings in life when we insist that Israel's path was true. Acceptance, even very dogmatic acceptance, of the way of Israel ought never to have precluded the recognition that the designs of God can be broader than its own vision of God could tell. Nor did it always. Arnold Toynbee has ascribed the doctrinal intolerance of Christians to their Judaistic origins. Yet the great Pentateuchal traditions (the Priestly *ex professo*, the older Yahwistic more than equivalently) prefaced to their belief in a unique and unrepeatable Sinaitic covenant with Israel, the divine covenant with all mankind in Noah. And as Jean Daniélou has shown, in its dealings with "holy pagans" the Old Testament made good on the possible conclusions from this premise. From later on in the same tradition, we might remember the often perversely misunderstood *angelus ex machina* whom Aquinas imagined the Christian God might send in order to guarantee the universality of his salvific will.

Nevertheless, the force of Pascal's discovery remains, that the God of the philosophers is no God of Christians. Here I would firmly dissociate from Schubert Ogden by specifying the philosophers as both modern *and* classical; Pascal, it is not always remembered, added "scholars" to his "philosophers." He is not such a God, I believe, simply because he is a God who has appeared in the experience of a people, and there has never been a people of philosophers. Judged by this standard the God of philosophers must always be a suspect deity: it is hard to credit the idea that a God who has revealed himself to such a few really cares enough about man that man should care much about him. He is an ideal deity to the same extent that Plato's Republic of philosophers was an ideal polity, extending to no real condition of man. There is no question here, obviously, of arguing about or against philosophical objectivation: no one should presume to challenge another man's philosophy unless he is prepared, if he can, to retrace the path that led the other to it. It is only that there is such little likelihood that it will ever be the path of any other men. The God of Bultmann, Heidegger, of, I strongly suspect, Paul Tillich, of, I would venture to say, Bishop Robinson (the theologian rather than the exegete), certainly of Professor Whitehead, will always remain a very personal deity, necessary, no doubt, a true God for his true believers, but just as irrelevant to the larger world of man as the *Protos Aion* was to the man in the streets of Periclean Athens.

A God of Salvation

The God of the Bible is the God of a people's historical experience. Acceptance of his word begins, as does any other truly human attitude towards life, with an act of faith. Faith in the biblical God is, first and foremost, faith in a God of salvation: it was as a saving God that Israel first experienced Yahweh and that Paul experienced Christ and the God revealed in Christ. And it was in terms of salvation that all the other works of God were understood, not excluding creation when, somewhat tardily, a theology of creation was evolved which, in both the Old and the New Testaments, appears as the divine saving act *par excellence*.

If we ask, from what is God supposed to have saved man, the answer would have to be, at its most basic, from the meaninglessness of existence—existence which, only when it has taken on meaning and purpose, does the Bible know as "life."

Existence without this faith the Bible does consider meaningless, and in this respect the Bible has a far clearer title to the assent of universal human experience than any God of the philosophers can have. Bishop Robinson quotes Professor Huxley, a voice from the past with which he seems to have been strangely impressed, on the inevitability of science's producing at the last the grand synthesis in which the need of God will be no more. But as we know very well, science has not made the world more comprehensible and rational, but quite the reverse. The thinking man's response to the world science has given him has been no grand synthesis, but that existentialist decision and renunciation which is the humanistic *credo quia absurdum*. Biblical faith is itself such a de-

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cision and renunciation, but in favor of a saving God.

One element in the biblical anthropology that necessitated a saving God is what we in Christian terminology have long known as original sin. However it may have been or is now articulated, this notion corresponds to something that seems to be a universal human experience on which man is agreed, as long as he is left to his experience and not, as St. Paul would say, deceived by philosophy. The Yahwistic author of the tenth pre-Christian century articulated it in the beautiful paradise myth which has contributed the adjective "original" to our traditional vocabulary. Elsewhere in the Bible it has been articulated otherwise and without recourse to the myth, which in any case is peripheral; St. Paul alone in the New Testament returns to the Yahwist's story, without making a point of it as a story.

Here as elsewhere the Bible has used myth on occasion because it is the Bible, "because it is only Christian men guard even heathen things." Its use of myth, however, does not make the Bible a mythology. Already in its own way and for its own reasons it had begun to do what Father Hulsbosch has seemingly demonstrated we must do again and for other reasons in this Teilhardian age. But when we do what we must, when the myth has been sorted away, we can still recognize ourselves ineluctably in the biblical word: "the inner longing for eternity and the impotence to fulfill this longing . . . a wanderer who, in the depths of his heart, longs for the Tree of Life, but sees that the gate is closed."

The historical experience in which Israel encountered its saving God is the revelation that constituted it a light to the nations and is the most meaningful sense in which Israel was and is an elect people. It was its unrefracted view of man who knows good and evil, in whose members there is this war of interests, that made Israel reject the attempt to project a macrocosm more logical of itself than the microcosm. It remains a touchstone of this biblical faith that man and the world he inhabits cannot save themselves, that they must be saved from without. Neither has this situation been altered as an experiential fact for everyman because of the incarnation and atonement which Christian faith understands to be the epitome of the revealing and saving word: they have but delineated the culmination of a way of salvation that Israel already knew. If, as Father Hulsbosch says, Christ has opened the gate, if the New Testament preaches a realized eschatology, it is only in virtue of our hope in an eschatology that remains final and future. With Oscar Cullmann I believe that an abandonment of true eschatology is the sure and infallible sign of apostasy from Christianity and a reversion to the myth of timelessness from which the Bible once saved us.

It is, therefore, to an authentic human condition that the biblical word continues to speak. There is a place in it for the healthy skepticism of Ecclesiastes and the healthy eroticism of the Song of Songs as well as for Amos' cry for justice and Hosea's vision of a God of love, for these too are part of that human condition to which and in which God reveals himself; these too are the word of God. An unerring instinct brought them into the canon of Scripture, to the scandal of those who will not take man as he is and therefore will not hear God as he has spoken. There is a place in it for Paul's friendly note to Philemon as well as for his letter to the Romans, for the inspired grotesquerie of the Apocalypse along with the Sermon on the Mount. It is in this sense that *sola scriptura* does somehow sum up all that we expect to know about God, because it is so true to all that we know about man.

True Life

By knowing the human condition to which it speaks, the biblical word is really capable of offering salvation, of conferring that meaningful existence which it presents as true life. It reaches man in his twin loci of time and place and frees him from both of these by transforming them both. As Brevard Childs has argued, what is really unique about the biblical concept of time is the qualitative discontinuity it ascribes to it. "The new is not a mere renewal, but the entrance of the unexpected." In this concept is the seed of progress, of hope, for man and for his world. As with time, so with place. Places are important to the Bible because there something happened; it was not that something happened because of the place. The biblical word liberates man from the pretended sureties of time and place by destroying their natural autonomy over him, by historicizing them. Or, put in other words, biblical faith sets man free of what Erich Fromm calls his narcissism, his natural attachment to the womb that gave him birth, and sends him forth on pilgrimage to find what it assures him is the real meaning of life.

Abraham passing from Ur to Canaan, Jacob from Canaan to Egypt, Moses and Israel from Egypt back to Canaan again, Jesus on pilgrimage from Galilee to Jerusalem, Paul from Jerusalem to Rome: the Bible is not only a history of salvation but its itinerary as well, yet only as time and place are conditions to be used and themselves the causes of nothing. In the New Testament the liberating word achieves its perfection in the person of one who regarded not even a divine primal condition as a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself of it to obtain through pilgrimage a name above every other name and in whom was therefore revealed the supreme paradox of Christian faith, that life is to be found not in cherishing it but in throwing it away.

The *synkatabasis* that is biblical revelation sometimes hangs the exegete and theologian on the horns of a hermeneutical dilemma. Has the biblical word been predetermined by a view of God and man that was a Semitic cultural phenomenon of a number of pre-Christian and the first Christian centuries, or has it been the word itself that formed the biblical categories? Often it may be quite

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impossible to establish the priorities. In many details I am sure that it does not matter much whether we can establish them or not, though in certain vital areas it is very important indeed that we should. Certainly the Bible itself was in no doubt about the priorities at least as regards the key affirmations of biblical faith. As the Second Isaiah reminded Israel, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says Yahweh. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts." The continual newness of the Bible's historical experience in which time and place were transformed, the Bible saw as the continued inbreaking upon its consciousness of a word from without. Jesus is the Word to the Fourth Evangelist precisely because he has revealed the God whom no man has ever seen.

It may seem that there is a somewhat unresolved epistemology in these biblical concepts. The perennial newness of the prophetic word, the guarantee of a theology of progress and human freedom the very opposite of a myth of eternal return or of any determinism ethical or historical, at the same time asks to be judged and accepted on the basis of the already known, the *tradita*. John's and Paul's exhortations to test the spirits merely echo the protestations of the great prophets and of Deuteronomy, and the grounds of the testing are the same: "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and offers to do a sign or wonder for you, and the sign or wonder comes about; and if he then says to you, 'Come, then, let us follow other gods (whom you have not known) and serve them,' you are not to listen to the words of that prophet or to the dreams of that dreamer . . . That prophet or that dreamer of dreams must be put to death, for he has preached apostasy from Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery." On a more positive note, the author of Hebrews and the New Testament in general appeal for the credibility of the Christian word to the many different times and ways in which the same word had come to the fathers of the Israelite and Jewish past.

The resolution of the epistemological difficulty apparently lies in the biblical conviction of a consistent historical process to which human experience was warrant. It is this historical process, I feel, that remains the *locus standi vel cadendi* of biblical faith today, and it is shocking to find that at times it is made of such little account in the very name of the faith it underlies. This is said not as an appeal for historicism or in the thought that historical criticism can of itself validate any of the interpretations the Bible has given to any event in history. I insist only that for the biblical authors the interpretations they offered *were* of events and not "cleverly devised tales" (2 Peter 1:16); and an idea of "salvation history" that treats as irrelevant our ability, or the degree of it, to get at these underlying events I fail to see as much concerned about the difference between history and cleverly devised tales. The studies of Alt and Albright, de Vaux and Gordon, Speiser and Glueck on the God of the Fathers and the Fathers themselves; of Noth and L'Hour on the Israelite amphictyony; of Mendenhall, Beyerlin, Baltzer, and McCarthy on the Mosaic age and Israel's covenant—all of these I consider to be matters of pressing contemporary concern for biblical faith, as are the studies of Dodd and Jeremias and the post-Bultmannians in the kerygma of New Testament Christianity.

The late T. W. Manson once wrote: "It is easy to laugh at those who, a couple of generations ago, saw in Jesus a good nineteenth-century humanist with a simple faith in a paternal deity. It is less easy to see the joke when the Jesus of history is a twentieth-century existentialist, a kind of pre-existent Heidegger . . . But if God does reveal himself in history, it is there if anywhere that we must find him. If God did in fact speak through the prophets we cannot absolve ourselves from the task of finding out as exactly as we can what was said and what is meant. If God did in fact speak to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, it is vitally important to know as fully and as accurately as possible what sort of life and death and resurrection became the medium of the divine revelation. There is no escape from the historical inquiry."

The historical inquiry will continue as long as we do. To the extent that it can continue, biblical religion can remain relevant, translatable into the historically changing condition of man. And to this extent, too, it can remain a constant challenge to historical man. Some*thing* happened in the Exodus, some*thing* in the Resurrection. If we believe what the Bible says this something meant, it is our task to find out better what indeed it was, the better to understand it in relation to our own needs and responses. If necessary—as sometimes it is inevitable—this must be done at the sacrifice of outworn biblical categories. Karl Rahner is quite in the right when he warns against confusing biblical theology with a pious biblicism. A word—any word—demands continual translation if it is to continue to be a word. What is to be translated is the Bible and not, as some seem to imagine, the contemporary hearer of the word, whose head they want to cram with "Semitic thought patterns." Translation of this kind is a rather more complicated process than simple "demythologizing."

If, on the other hand, we are no longer concerned at all with the biblical something as an experienced reality that can speak to us, we had better stop thinking in terms of a biblical faith altogether. Some*one* acted in the Exodus, in the Resurrection. We cannot read the Psalms or the prophet Jeremiah or the apostle Paul without recognizing how this conviction is all of the Bible. Unless we can share that conviction, we had better move on to some better source of religious inspiration than the Bible. This, I think, is not for the Bible to ask too much, that we take it for what it is or leave it alone.

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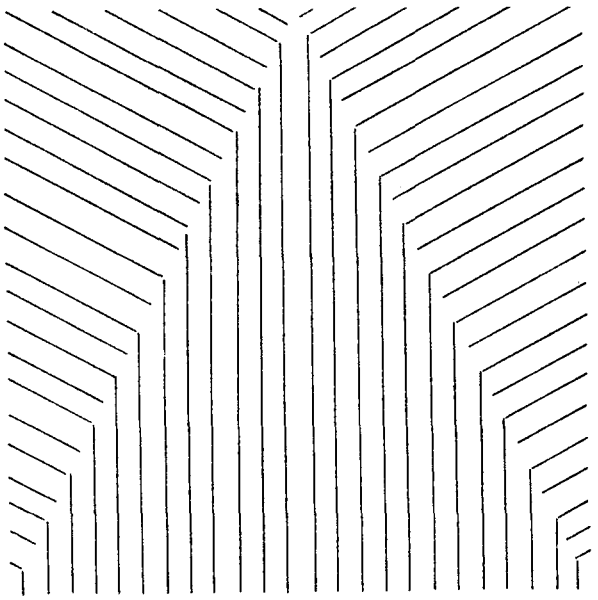

Can we say that the standpoint of Jesus is relative? Is this not tantamount to denying his divinity? Actually to say this neither affirms nor denies his divinity. It does affirm his humanity.

THE HUMAN GOD: JESUS

JOHN S. DUNNE

"The passion of man," Sartre has said, "is the reverse of that of Christ, for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born." What Sarte means, I think, is that man attempts to do away with the concerns and anxieties which make him human, either by fulfilling his desires or else by hardening himself to pain and deprivation or else by renouncing his hopes and fears, in order that the fulfilled or hardened or detached being which he conceives to be divine may be born.

Something hinders us, if this is true, from entering fully into the A.D. period and finding our way to the present. We lose ourselves as human beings in order that God may be born. We are like the two bums, Vladimir and Estragon, who are waiting for Godot in the tragicomedy by Samuel Beckett. We are oriented towards the future, waiting for the future to dawn. We live in B.C., waiting for A.D. to come, waiting for God to be born. Vladimir and Estragon wait and wait again, but Godot never comes. The future is always ahead, always still to come. Complete fulfilment, complete hardening, complete detachment are always out of reach. "We lose ourselves in vain," Sartre has concluded, "man is a useless passion."

What is missing here, I believe, is the humanity of Christ, the idea that the passion of God, God losing himself as God in order that man may be born, the reverse of what Sartre called the "passion of man," would also be a human passion. It would be, in fact, the passion to be human, just as the passion of man is the passion to be divine. Although man is not God and therefore in a sense cannot lose himself as God, he can very well have the desire to be God, to be God through fulfilment or through hardening or through renunciation, and so he can lose himself as God by aiming at being man rather than at being God. The lost pathway into the present, according to this, would have to be the path of the "kenosis," the "emptying" of self described in the great hymn about Christ in Philippians 2:7. We can understand what it is to desire to be God through fulfilment of desire or through hardening against pain and deprivation or through renunciation of hope and fear, and so we can understand conversely what it is to aim at being man rather than God.

When we make humanity our aim, however, and enter thereby into a sympathetic understanding of the passion of Christ, we come to believe that the fulfilled or hardened or detached being which we had imagined to be divine on the basis of our own desire to be God is not the genuine God, but the genuine God is the one who loses himself as God in order that man may be born. This is my way of stating that central theme of contemporary theology which Karl Barth has called "the humanity of God."

The Quest of the Earthly Jesus

If we may expect to discover the genuine God when we discover the humanity of Jesus, how do we go about discovering the humanity of Jesus? This has been one of the chief theological problems of recent times. One approach to it has been the famous "quest of the historical Jesus" which was criticized by Albert Schweitzer and which has been renewed in a somewhat changed form more recently by some of the followers of Rudolf

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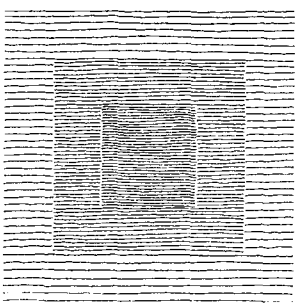
Bultmann. Another has been Soren Kierkegaard's project of "becoming contemporary with Christ." The quest of the historical Jesus was essentially a quest of the true standpoint on Jesus. The trouble was that there were many possible standpoints, that of Matthew, that of Mark, that of Luke, that of John. Which was the true one? On the whole it seemed that the true standpoint was that of Mark. In the last analysis, though, the quest of the true standpoint appeared to be hopeless, and the historical Jesus seemed to be forever hidden in the past. This result was obtained on Jesus, but it could also have been obtained on other personages if the same zeal and rigor and exactitude were applied to finding the true standpoint on them. For instance, which was the true standpoint on Socrates? That of Plato, that of Xenophon, or that of Aristophanes? Or is Socrates too, as has also been suggested, hidden forever in the past?



The real upshot, if the relativity of standpoints is taken into account, is not that Jesus and Socrates and, for that matter, every other personage of the past and even of the present is simply hidden. It is rather that the kind of knowledge we can have of ourselves and others is a "knowledge of ignorance" instead of a "knowledge of knowledge." We can know what was true about Jesus from the standpoints of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and we can know what was true about Socrates from the standpoints of Plato, Xenophon, and Aristophanes, even though we know that each of these standpoints is relative. We can pass over, furthermore, from these standpoints, relative as they are, to the standpoints of Jesus and Socrates themselves, while realizing that these two are relative. This is how I would propose to carry out Kierkegaard's project of "becoming contemporary with Christ."

But can we say that the standpoint of Jesus is relative? It this not tantamount to denying his divinity? Actually to say this neither affirms nor denies his divinity. It does affirm his humanity. Let us consider, at any rate, what the life of Jesus would look like if we should assume that his standpoint on his own life was relative. The relativity of a person's standpoint on his own life is the fact that there are as many different standpoints on his life as there are different moments in his life. These standpoints always differ quantitatively, the past and future being longer or shorter according to the point where the person stands in his life, but they differ qualitatively, the past and future being taken differently, before and after the turning points of the person's life. The turning points in the life of Jesus, I would suggest, concern his relations to John the Baptist. At any rate, here again, let us consider what the life of Jesus would look like if we should assume that this is so.

The first great turning point in the life of Jesus would have been his meeting with John the Baptist. What this meeting did, it appears, was to raise in his life the issue of being God's son, God's beloved. He came to John apparently in a considerably less exalted state of mind, ready to undergo John's baptism of repentance and to be one among many sinners. When he was baptized, however, he had a vision of the Spirit descending upon him, and a voice was heard declaring him God's beloved son in whom God was well pleased. Then he went into the desert and was tempted, some of the temptations taking the form "if you are God's son. . . ." The meaning of "God's son" here is probably the one suggested by the words "beloved" and "in whom I am well pleased," namely one who is God's beloved and in whom God is well pleased. What happens here, this would imply, is that Jesus, who is ready at this point to take his place among sinners, receives and experiences unconditional acceptance from God.

Now from the standpoints of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there can be no question of Jesus taking his place among sinners, and then too he is God's son in a somewhat different sense for each of them but always in a stronger sense than this. It is possible, nonetheless, to pass over from their respective standpoints to that of Jesus at this point in his life by attending closely to the fact that he does, however paradoxical it seems, present himself to John for a baptism of repentance, and that the words declaring him God's son can be understood, however weak this seems in the light of later events, simply as God's favor.

Jesus evidently did not presume to be his own judge, either to condemn himself or to approve of himself. He came ready to accept condemnation of his past and received instead unconditional acceptance. Acceptance, however, was not without its problems as the temptations immediately following demonstrated. The story of these temptations as it was told from the standpoints of Matthew and Luke was probably meant to show how Jesus overcame the temptations to which Israel had succumbed in the desert. This does not prevent them from having been very real and personal from the standpoint of Jesus himself. Ready to undergo the baptism of repentance, he had been ready to accept condemnation of the past and to set the future against the past. Unconditionally accepted and looking towards the future anew, he was tempted to take advantage of his acceptance, but he refused to do so. Although he had been declared God's beloved like King David, he renounced the thought of an earthly kingdom, he resolved to live by God's word rather than

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by bread alone, and he determined not to presume upon God's acceptance or to put it to the test.

The second great turning point in the life of Jesus would have been the imprisonment of John the Baptist. When John was imprisoned, as Mark tells us, or when Jesus heard that John was imprisoned, as Matthew tells us, Jesus went into Galilee and began to preach. The imprisonment of John, the stopping of John's preaching, was the signal for the beginning of Jesus' preaching. Significantly too, as Matthew reports it, the message with which Jesus began was the same as the message of John, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is as though Jesus felt called upon to take John's place, to proclaim the message which John was now prevented from proclaiming.

The purport of John's message, however, would have been quite transformed when it came from the mouth of Jesus, transformed by the familiar relationship with God which grew out of unconditional acceptance. Jesus called God not merely "Father," in formal terms as we translate it, but "Abba," the familiar form in Aramaic, an unprecedented usage. What is more, he taught other men to speak of God and to God in this way, as though they too were unconditionally acceptable to God.

What Jesus saw himself as doing at this period of his life comes out, it seems, in his reply to the disciples of John the Baptist who were sent by John from prison to ask Jesus "Are you the one coming or are we waiting for another?" Jesus replied "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised and the poor receive the good news, and happy is he who is not scandalized at me."

This reply by Jesus suggests a passage from the prophecy of Isaiah, the same passage with which Luke has Jesus begin his preaching. It probably describes what Jesus at this time conceived to be the coming of the Kingdom of God. From the standpoints of the evangelists the coming of the kingdom was probably much more than the coming of Jesus in his public life, it was his coming in glory, risen from the dead. From the standpoint of Jesus himself at this period, though, the coming of God's kingdom would be the new situation which comes about as he communicates to other men what he himself received at his baptism, God's unconditional acceptance.

The third great turning point in the life of Jesus would have been the death of John the Baptist. "When Jesus heard of it," Matthew tells us, "he withdrew from there in a boat to desert country by himself." In John's death Jesus probably saw his own impending death. As John the Baptist was put to death by Herod, so also, Jesus and his contemporaries could see, was Jesus himself likely to be put to death. To begin his ministry, after the imprisonment of John, was to risk imprisonment, to continue it now, after the execution of John, was to risk death. As a matter of fact, Herod, thinking that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead, wished to kill him. When Jesus was told of this, he said "Go and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils and do works of healing today and tomorrow, and on the third day I am finished. Yet today and tomorrow and the day after I must go on because it is not appropriate for a prophet to die outside of Jerusalem." Perhaps he meant by this that he would presently finish his work in Galilee, Herod's jurisdiction, but that he was going on to Jerusalem where he expected to die as had most of the prophets who were put to death. He dreaded the prospect. "Abba," he prayed in the garden of Gethsemani, "all things are possible to you, take away this cup from me, but not what I will but what you will."

This prayer reveals the genuine attitude of Jesus towards his own death during this last period of his life. The death of Jesus probably made a great deal more sense from the standpoints of the evangelists than it did from his own standpoint at this time. It was not without meaning, however, from his own point of view, with his attitude towards God's will and his filial confidence in God. From the standpoints of the evangelists, Jesus had to die so that by raising him from the dead God could reveal that Jesus was the Lord. From his own standpoint Jesus could probably have said something like what John the evangelist said: "Beloved, we are now children of God and it has not yet been manifested what we shall be."

Jesus had already received and experienced unconditional acceptance from God and lived on familiar terms with God, calling him "Abba," but from his present standpoint it had not yet been manifested what he was ultimately to be. He was led into temptation and his relationship with God put to the test upon the cross where he cried out "Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani?"—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Still he did not despair, but was praying at the end, "Abba, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Thus if we assume that the standpoint of Jesus was relative, manifold, changing from period to period in his life, he appears to be fully and unequivocally human. His divinity, nevertheless, is not denied. Actually the full impact of the statement "Jesus is the Lord," the fundamental statement of Christian faith, cannot be felt without first grasping the reality of his humanity. It is only when one sees Jesus as fully and unequivocally human that his lordship and divinity appears for the staggering mystery that it is. This is the way it will have appeared to his original disciples, who will have known him first as a man, obviously a man, and only afterwards, when he rose from the dead, will have perceived his lordship and divinity.

In our culture, by contrast, where Jesus is the archetypal man, the culture hero, it is necessary to move to a position where he can be seen as truly human. To feel the overwhelming mystery of the incarnation in our time

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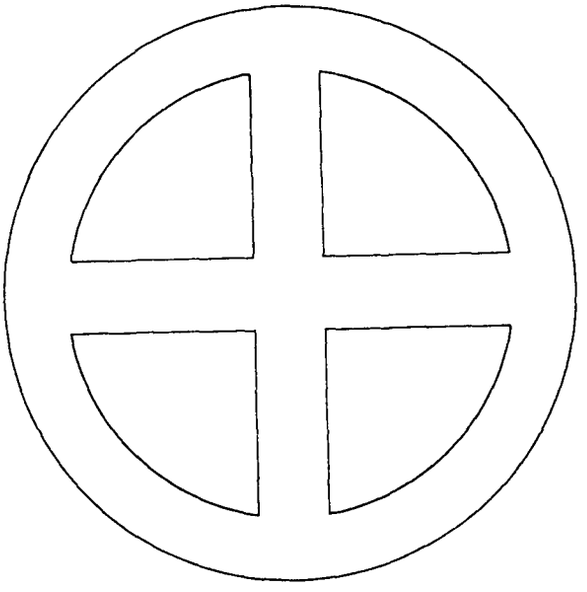
it is necessary to pass from the initial stage in which we find ourselves where Jesus is the culture hero, through an intermediate stage in which he becomes fully and unequivocally human for us, to a final stage in which we can appreciate the unending wonder of the statement "Jesus is the Lord."

To reach this intermediate stage where Jesus is fully and unequivocally human for us, we must pass over from the standpoint in which we are subjective and Jesus is objective (as culture hero) to the standpoint in which he is subjective. Luther, for example, attempted to enter into sympathy with Jesus by conceiving the abandonment experienced by Jesus on the cross to have been actual despair. I believe that Luther was wrong on this, that Jesus did not despair, though he said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", but that he continued to the last to hope in spite of his experience of Godforsakenness—"Abba, into your hands I commend my spirit." Still Luther was able, notwithstanding this seeming error in the process, to pass over to the subjective standpoint of Jesus, to grasp the reality of Jesus' humanity and thus to feel the full impact of the gospel that "Jesus is the Lord."

Although we cannot be sure of our grounds, therefore, in passing over to the standpoint of Jesus, it is still supremely worthwhile to make the attempt and to accept the risks involved. For it is only in passing over in this manner, I believe, that the humanity of Jesus becomes real to us and we enter into a position where we can perceive the overpowering significance of the tidings that "God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name."



Paradox remains the form for grappling with the transcendent, though its tension will be heightened, its grip tighter, when used of God. He is present to those who acknowledge his presence, but always in darkness; he is present by an absence.

GOD: LANGUAGE AND TRANSCENDENCE

DAVID B. BURRELL

Remarks about the death of God, as those sensitive to language have noted, are in fact observations about contemporary culture. They do not pretend to metaphysical assertions or claim any witness to the event. They rather turn us back upon ourselves, reflecting in one more way our relentless demand for honesty. If most of us are practically pagans most of the time, let's admit it. The statement can assume many accents: a strident boast —we don't need God any more; a cry in the dark—show us his true face, for he cannot be the one we've been told about; or a bland indifference. For the first two, God's death is an event, something one has lived through or is presently experiencing. For the last there is no event, no death; but simply an absence—an absence without any hint of a presence, a bare fact. Simple indifference to transcendence may take the detached Gallican form of Camus' Mersault, or more probably the jerky erratic form of Updike's Rabbit. Yet it remains indifference, with little opening for any voice from within or without.

The strident boast can be absorbed: human needs know many strata. Christianity contains the seeds of liberation from any and all pagan forms of slavish dependence upon God. It has simply taken a good measure

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of human time to assimilate the message, though authentic Christians have realized it in every age. The *deus ex machina* departed from the scene the day it refused to come to the aid of Jesus and the temple veil was rent. The cry can be comforted and its source dried up. God *has* shown his own face; it is his clerks who have distorted it. "Philip, how long have I been with you and you do not know me. Philip, He who sees me sees the Father." But this sort of transcendence proved insufficiently divine for men. The scandal of God-man had to be removed, and along with it the threat to restore men their freedom. The task of setting it straight again has occupied churchmen from Jesus' time to the present. The world has ever witnessed a kind of complicity between clergy and laity to keep the message under wraps lest men have to face their own humanity in acknowledging the humanity of God. Indeed nothing authenticates the Christian message quite so much as this incapacity of its purveyors to assimilate it.

Observations like these can divert both boast and cry into an honest inquiry into the sources of man's questing after God. And this we shall begin, investigating *transcendence* as the key to man's opening to himself as well as to God. But, first, the indifference. Unlike the other two attitudes, this has to be challenged. Not castigated but challenged, for it seems to be more of a cultural fact than a personal response—since it marks the lack of any response. The roots of this indifference have often been traced to the analytical sophistication of "contemporary man," who has consciously assimilated a scientific world view and consequently has no need of the God-hypothesis. While this may be true of some, it seems too academic to be true of most. For the question of God has seldom posed itself as one to be satisfied by scientific reasoning or proof. It seems rather more germane to questions of the worth and meaning of human life, and few feel that science sheds much light here. I would suggest a more promising and illuminating reading of current indifference as symptomatic of the contemporary democratic man who has quite innocently assimilated a Marxist view of himself and his worth.

The release of energy effected by the scientific revolution has certainly liberated us from any need for superstitious dependence on the vestiges of pagan divinities. But it has not always left us time to pursue the essential question of what is worthwhile. Indeed, the simple lack of leisure in our society is puzzling enough, but the near incapacity for it is baffling. Baffling at least until we recognize that "leisure" is not a simple descriptive term, but stands for an entire complex of attitudes that turn on appreciation and celebration, and these attitudes presume some point of contact with what spells worth and bestows value.

Now the quest for genuine worth, a conscious pursuit of "the Good," has never been expected of everyone. So the social structure envisioned by Plato and embodied (if only in barest outline) until quite recently in aristocratic society bestowed worth on the various positions in society and so granted to each free man—even the lowest —a sense of participation in a communal endeavor. The questions that one felt unable to ponder on his own had been considered and decided by others more eminent. Their decisions wrought the social organization, so each man's humble contribution *was* worthwhile. A convenient arrangement, and most certainly humanizing in its own right, but "man come of age" simply cannot settle for it. We can no longer rest content with a pre-determined worth or even a pre-fabricated respectability. Whether we are impelled to the genuine article or content with its artificial substitute, there is no other route open than the precarious one of achievement.

Now it seems clear that a world given over to achieving can leave no room for leisure. For celebration and joy introduce an air of the gratuitous, of worth bestowed rather than achieved. To the taut psyche required of an achiever, "leisure" can only mean "slack," and not much slack can be tolerated. The same could be said for genuine relations with other persons or a possible encounter with God. For the resolute achiever simply has no room for another—even less the Other—though the blame is often laid elsewhere: God is inimical to the human spirit. To the aggressive spirit, agreed; but how inimical has this same spirit proven to man himself?

Ironically and tragically, however, perhaps God seems inimical as well to the spirit made aggressive by a society where worth must be earned, respectability attained. Perhaps Nietszche was prophesying the need that post-aristocratic men would have to forcibly eliminate God, and notably the God who showed his face in Jesus, as they would be constrained to forge their own way to recognition, devoid of a tradition to assign them worth and their actions value. (There will certainly be black moments for one chained to achievement. Besides the imminent possibility of failure, respectability itself is often endangered by the very manner in which one had to attain it. But to appeal to God at these points would certainly be reaching out for a crutch. It would be demeaning to the person and insulting to God. Hence despair, whether of a dramatic continental variety or the more diffuse, cynical Anglo-Saxon type, remains one's only *resource*.)

Now to be assigned one's worth was not exactly truthful. But many would probably find it somewhat more comforting than beginning with none—which seems to be the inevitable interpretation of *equality*. One must indeed make himself; no one can be spared the task. That is what rings true about a democratic renunciation of prior social structure. But how? Along what lines? By what model? Here hangs the question of *worth*. No longer a worth assigned but one required nonetheless, yet only available to him who would seek for it. But where can anyone find the time and the atmosphere to seek for it?

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For seeking of this sort is not achieving. It may mean bracketing the entire achievement process for a space, and is certainly threatening to it—for it explicitly asks whether the whole enterprise is worth it!

Now detours like this are uncomfortable for most when respectability and advancement are at stake, so we tend to settle for an assurance that all is worthwhile. Any assurance that is consonant with the democratic animus against pre-assigned worth, and also convenient and ready at hand, however, is bound to be some variant of Marxism: striving itself is a value and man's worth is measured, indeed created by his achievements. For us, of course, the ideological meat has been blended into a more palatable formula: contributing to the great American dream of universal prosperity. Hence 'striving' means carefully shaping one's aspirations to the present model and projecting it into an expansive future.

If the churches will support this myth, they are welcome, for their support enhances its claim to provide a genuine goal for one's life. They may render ritual service to the society and its gods as Christendom once bestowed permanence and sacredness on the arbitrary values assigned by an aristocratic society. But there is no room for God, of course. There cannot be, so long as one eschews the search for value and settles for the ersatz worth of historical process. Add the fact that concentrated striving has indeed transformed the face of the earth and given men many more playthings as well, so that the Socratic cry for reflection, for examining one's life to see if it be *worth* living, often finds but busy minds and distracted ears.

Harsh though they may sound, these things must be said, for there is an easy secularity, as Richard Comstock remarks, which "avoids serious issues and accepts the comforts of urban life with a superficial and thoughtless complacency." It is not without its ghosts, of course. One has only to reflect on the malaise lurking in suburbia, the protest of modern theater, the bitterness with which the conscious student rejects the myth or how he hates himself for subserving it. My sketchy attempt to culturally position this question of God is intended to meet these churnings as well as the stubborn fact of indifference. Whatever its success, none of us can spare himself the attempt, for the question of God was never one for abstract discussion, but ever a quest for what is of worth, an inquiry into the well-springs of our activity, a search for ourselves—now.

Space for Reflection

Augustine underscored the reflective and personal character of man's search for God when he gave general directions to "turn within." Questions about God do not seem to arise out of intellectual curiosity, but rather in the mind's acceding to more intimate demands of the spirit. Indeed, philosophical and methodological treatment of these questions often finds itself embarrassed at being unable to respond to them with sufficient finesse. I will try to establish their philosophical propriety by highlighting the structural similarity between questions about God and discourse about value. But something else is clearly required, something that can give us all enough confidence to take up Augustine's advice. One idiom could well be the fantasy tale—the Tolkien trilogy or Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia—whose very purpose is simply to provide pastures for the spirit to roam, discover its reaches, come to recognize its own visage.

Literature of this sort seems especially needful today, for spirits whose intensity has been harnessed to achieving. Perhaps the freedom foretasted here can give us courage to begin the search for what is worthwhile. And courage is needed, for a genuine search is bound to be painful as well as threatening: I am not only inquiring into the value of what I do, but wondering about my own worth as well. Perhaps fantasy literature can provide the space each spirit needs to recollect itself from within and renew its resolve not to be distracted from becoming a man.

There is no assurance, of course, that the search for what bestows worth will carry us to God; there is in fact no assurance it will *arrive* anywhere. But it is imperative that we undertake it, and I shall try to show how the inherent demands of this search intertwine with many of the supporting strands of the most sophisticated Judaeo-Christian discourse about God. Hopefully, by establishing an inner affinity between men searching for what is genuine and believers seeking understanding of their God, one can clear the way for a community of sentiment, and a gradual realization that their object may well be identical. More than this I cannot do.

But first a word about the not-so-sophisticated talk about God, which I suspect represents the greater part of it. Theological formulations, however remote and metaphysical they may appear, have a way of settling into clichés. These implant themselves in ordinary educated discourse about the divine, creating a kind of collage that serves as a common referent for "God." Witnessing the now stereotyped polemic of a Sartre or the revulsion of so many who have endured a standard catechesis, anyone religiously sensitive cannot help but feel that the response to the sacred and the demand for authenticity have been unduly estranged by the sedimented obscurities of our theological legacy.

Leslie Dewart (in his *Future of Belief*) speaks accurately of an "underdeveloped theism." Indeed nothing seems so underdeveloped or uncriticized, to believer and unbeliever alike, as our discoursings about God, whether from the pulpit or in the classroom. Or I should say nothing *seemed* so, until we were forced to realize how little of it we took seriously, how little we *could* take and remain humanly or spiritually alive! We have been forced to examine our formulations to ask whether "God" as we

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have continued to use the word could have any referent or is not, in that sense, dead. Nor can this examination stop short of a re-assessment of the classical theological tradition which has shaped the formulae sedimented in common usage.

The focal point of that tradition is Thomas Aquinas. To summarize his teaching on God here would be preposterous. No serious student can confront it without sheer admiration for the subtle way he presses semantics into serving a keen wit and a deeply honest religious sensibility. Yet we may speak to the *form* of his thought. God must be at once the source of being and the supreme being, if Aquinas is to be faithful to the metaphysical framework he inherited and made his own. That the source of being be beyond being follows from the logic of causal discourse; and once acknowledged, that this source *be* is a matter of strict logic. Yet God must exist in an utterly unique way: as the source of *all that is*. "He is not a substance, but the source of substance," Aquinas will say; he exists but *not* as anything else does. This paradox became domesticated by the schools into a "doctrine of analogy," allowing us to say and not say what he is like.

What is missing in the doctrine, however, and extremely underdeveloped in Aquinas himself is any suspicion that in talking about God we are doing more than speaking of a supreme something out there. Not that one denied the authenticity of religious experience, but the conviction remained that theology had to be able to discourse about God in categories germane to objects if it wanted to be considered a science. He had to be a transcendent object, of course, and this posed severe semantic difficulties, but his transcendence could not remove him from being an object. "Transcendent," then, would only come down to something like "far far away" yet still within the realm of objects. And if religious sensibility intervened to insist that he is totally other than any object we know (as it often did in Aquinas' own reflections) then anything said about him—spoken, that is, in the manner we speak about objects—was condemned to "death by a thousand qualifications."

So logicians must concur that analogy will not work, and that one simply cannot speak in a meaningful way of God, if he must also be a *transcendent* object, agent and the like. It has been the merit of the more logically inclined of the linguistic philosophers to have shown the weaknesses inherent in any attempt to treat God as an object. They have proven far less successful, however, in attempting to show what is really operating in religious discourse. Theirs has proved a useful critique of a theology which shared their assumptions, namely that meaningful discourse must be "about objects," and party to a species of scientific verifiability.

The weakness of traditional theism and the God it has left us to discourse about does not seem to lie so much in the metaphysical categories it employs to conceive the God-object, as in an unexamined use of "transcendent." For whether one thinks of something "far far away" or "deep deep within," he is still ruminating about an *object,* and the religious pressure that insists on God's transcendence tends to push any consideration of him completely out of the realm of objects. Whatever else "transcendence" means, it must place God over against the world and everything that is in it or could be in it. Since "transcendent" is our way of stating what makes God God, religion's primary demand upon theology is that it develops a language in which his transcendence be exhibited. So when one judges a theology of God underdeveloped, he means primarily that it has failed to remain consistently faithful to this demand.

If the tradition seems most vulnerable to us in failing to discover a language of transcendence, then the current neo-Whiteheadian effort seems quite beside the main point. For it challenges the way classical theology conceived the God-object—as *substance*—and then procedes to substitute another metaphysical notion whose status is every bit as objective and ontological, namely *process*. And whatever the merits of process as an alternative category for conceiving the God-object, neo-Whiteheadians feel constrained to assert transcendence as well, which they tend to do in uncritical, classical terms.

Language of Transcendence

But if his transcendence pushes God out of the realm of objects altogether, what hope can we have of speaking about him at all? Two clues to an alternative program can be gleaned from Aquinas himself. The first is an incidental remark to the effect that the most adequate lead we have to understanding spirit is one's presence to himself in conscious activity. The second is his constant insistence that any predicate used of God represent a *perfection*. Now if Aquinas' insistence is not to be redundant or banal, "perfection" must be an operative term. And to be operative it must be rooted in the fertile soil of human aspiration rather than merely occupy a niche in an ontological hierarchy. Indeed, how else are we to speak of a *perfection* except as that towards which *we* aspire? Unless what is to be valued appears as just that—of value—then we are accepting a valuation imposed from without.

Now we aspire to what is worthwhile, or better, only what is of worth can sustain the demands of human aspiration. In fact, the severe self-criticism built into human aspiration serves to define what will count as worthwhile. And the fact that auto-criticism represents an inherent demand and requires an ongoing and reflective process makes this act of defining into something far more active and plenary than a mere tautology: that to which men aspire is what they value or "where one's heart is there his treasure is also."

The language of aspiration, of course, has consistently defied attempts at straightforward analysis on the literal

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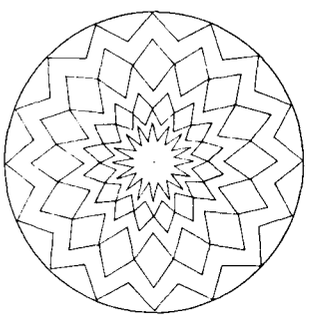
"propositional" mold. But this resistance could only be expected, for the hiatus between notional and real assent is a commonplace of our moral and personal experience. We are always asking of ourselves and of others whether we really stand for the ideals we verbally espouse. How often have we not found ourselves enunciating an insight into a new dimension of moral experience—that friendship, say, demands I allow the other freedom to grow and be himself—only to realize both in our actions and in later reflections that we had but the barest suspicion *what* we were saying? I am not simply calling attention to the gap between saying and doing, but to the incredibly open and progressive character of moral knowledge. Realizations that we come to about ourselves and others or our relations with others, even when formulated initially in a way which will prove basically accurate, can so grow in clarity and resonance that we often literally wonder whether we understood anything when we first formulated them.



Plato displayed this uncanny human experience in the irony of Socrates and captured it in his adage: "the [truly] wise man is one who realizes he is not wise." What saves the statement from contradiction is the mediating term "realizes," for this interior activity of recollection and self-assessment controls the resulting paradox and allows us to put it to use. Socrates hit upon a logical form for discoursing about anything to which we aspire, anything worth pursuing in its own right. "Justice," "sensitivity," "intelligence," "holiness," all fit the mold: "the (sensitive) man is one who realizes he is not (sensitive)." Trying to live by an ideal, reaching to incorporate it into our conscious activity only serves to open us to yet further reaches, even greater demands. Descriptive terms with evaluative overtones will also fit the mold, though we usually have to add "good" to avoid ambiguity. Thus "the (good) salesman realizes he is not a (good) salesman." But valuations imposed from without—in so far as they are imposed—will not work. We cannot say that a champion runner realizes he is not a champion runner, for he has been judged to be so, and champions are *made* by qualified judges employing predetermined standards.

Being a salesman differs from being just precisely in having to justify selling. Someone could ask "why be a salesman?" but it makes no sense to ask "why be just?" Classically, of course, men tried to grapple with the latter question by showing how intimately justice is linked with other human aspirations and concluding, as Plato did, that one must aspire after it if he would be human. But "human" is not used in a purely descriptive way here. It rather becomes a summary term for everything to which men aspire. And aspiration is built into what is human along with the possibility of turning against our nature, so it is not a simple fact that man must be human. The "must" here is a moral requirement, not a fact of nature; hence we can speak of personal and moral growth as "becoming human" and use "humanism" to describe a set of values. In other words, "human" used in this way will fit Socrates' mold.

This demand for what is worthwhile, coupled with a progressive ability to discriminate between genuine needs (or aspirations) and immediate or compulsive needs has been termed human "transcendence." And aptly so, for talk about the worthwhile gives us a model for discourse about God and releases us from attempting to capture the transcendent as an object in imaginative terms: far far away or deep deep within. Furthermore, the Socratic paradox provides a human way to express and to recognize the essential feature of the *worthwhile* which links it so closely with God and his transcendence. That is what distinguishes what is worthwhile from a simple strategy, values from mere options—namely that what is worthwhile is simply that, worthwhile, and cannot be traded off for something else "above it."

The sign of this fact is not so much that the worthwhile, the authentic, imposes an obvious duty, as that it continues to draw us on. The source of human aspiration is not an imperative but the inexhaustible character of what is truly worthwhile. Though the quest for justice never be realized, our actual achievements are not thereby judged and condemned by some ineluctable standard. These very achievements only serve to renew our faith in what is essential to man—his aspiration to value. Socrates' just man who realizes he is not just does not despair but grasps that much more about himself—as he is and as he must become.

The "transcendence" built into the worthwhile, then, serves to define it and explain why questing after it need not be justified. And the fact that man's purposes need to subserve a value if he is to be free says something about man himself. And these twin facts provide a key to men's questions about God and their discourse about him. For the questions are raised concomitantly with those demanding a direction, a meaning for one's life. And any response which mentions God will speak of him in terms of like logical structure with those of human aspirations. As Ugo Betti put it, "Each of these mysterious needs . . . without which man cannot breathe or survive . . . is one side of a perimeter whose complete figure, when we finally perceive it, has one name: GOD."

Paradox remains the form for grappling with the transcendent, though its tension will be heightened, its

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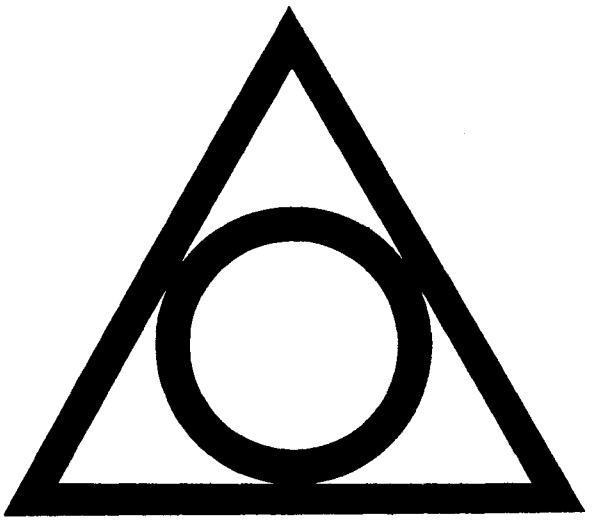
grip tighter when used of God. He is present to those who acknowledge his presence, but always in darkness; he is present by an absence. Like Socrates', this paradox is not an outright contradiction. It rather illuminates for us, starkly yet accurately, something of presence as we experience it. Only what remains recessed and in some way absent can ever be present to me. What is transparent or merely puzzling is simply there, over against me but never present to me. Properly religious discourse grows more confident of this presence, and unlike theological talk *about* God, begins to speak more of him as one who is living with him.

Since the presence remains an absence, questing is never done with, but the accent shifts from our striving to his initiative. What justifies this shift in accent? Nothing of course but the growing presence-in-absence of God. But we can open ourselves to it by yielding to the unyielding demands of our spirit for what is worthwhile, both in fantasy and in fact. Nothing can assure us that the other side of these transcendent human aspirations is God but God himself. This he has tried to do by showing us his face in the man Jesus.



Many Christians refuse to accept the fact that the books of Scripture remain intrinsically dependent on the civilization in which they were written. Many still find it difficult to accept the idea of religious development since the New Testament.

THE GOD OF HISTORY

LOUIS DUPRÉ

Christians claim that theirs is an historical religion, distinguished from the non-historical, cyclic world view of the Greeks by the definitive, irreversible meaning of temporal events. Yet, no sooner is someone willing to believe this and to consider Christianity as historically determined and historically developing, than believers lose faith in their own assumption that God *can* speak an historical language. Their perplexity in the face of present-day reinterpretations of scriptural texts and ecclesiastical documents shows that they had never accepted evolution and relativity as essential characteristics of the historical, but had simply redefined history so as to fit a purely static concept of religion.

Now, it must be admitted in all fairness to the perplexed believer that religion is much more than an historical process: it is above all a dialogue with the transcendent, initiated by a revelation from a *trans-historical,* divine sphere. Still in the Judaeo-Christian tradition this revelation itself occurs as an historical event. God reveals Himself through the history of a particular people and, within this history, in a definitive way through the acts and words of one man. Insofar as the revelation takes on an historical character, it must be received into that dynamic process through which man constantly creates and recreates his values.

Many Christians are not willing to draw this conclusion and hold strongly anti-historical views on Scripture and tradition. They refuse to accept the fact that the books of the Scripture remain intrinsically dependent on the civilization in which they were written. Of course, we no longer use the Bible as a test for judging geological and biological theories. But in more sensitive matters *concordism* is far from dead. Many still find it difficult to accept the idea of *moral* progress since the New Testament and, even more, that of *religious* development. Yet such progress is inevitable if the revelation is truly historical.

The sacred writers themselves seem to have been more

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aware of the fully human (and, therefore, historical) manner in which God's message is communicated to man. The author of II *Machabees* presents his book to the public with a slightly apologetic justification for his one-volume abridgment of another author's five-volume history. "The thing is not easy, and takes sweat and midnight oil." (2 Mc 2, 26-27) God's transhistorical message here is communicated through the unimaginative and pedantic mind of a hellenized Jew who may not have known that he was writing a holy scripture but who certainly knew how to sell a book.

Even the Evangelists, who were fully aware of the unique religious import of the words and events they reported, realized that their writings would capture only as much of the divine revelation as their human and personal limitations would allow. The Fourth Gospel concludes with the following declaration: "There is much else that Jesus did. If it were all to be recorded in detail, I suppose the whole world would not hold the books that would be written." And Luke commences his story with a modest evaluation of his own position among the Gospel narrators: "Many writers have undertaken to draw up an account of the events that have happened among us. . . . And so in my turn, your Excellency, as one who has gone over the whole course of these events in detail, I have decided to write a connected narrative for you, so as to give you authentic knowledge about the matters of which you have been informed."

If the divine message is to make sense at all it cannot be a meteoric block "hurled at the world," but it must be actively received within a particular universe of discourse that will restrict it by its own limitations. There is no such thing as a purely passive reception of truth. Man alone can make truth, even though he must be divinely inspired to make *revealed* truth. But if this is the case, it follows that the *expression* of a revealed truth depends largely on the capacity of the receiving subject and this capacity is always to some extent culturally circumscribed.

Can there be a definitive expression of God's revelation, a final truth about what he has communicated to us? If *definitive* and *final* are understood in the sense of a total adequacy between the expression and the expressed, no single historical expression can ever exhaust God's revelation. Not even divine authority precludes concrete statements concerning man and his values from being subject to further evolution, for man himself continues to develop. On the other hand, the revelation (and the authentic tradition) must be expressed adequately enough to remain authoritative for later generations.

This conclusion applies even to the words of Christ. As a man Christ could not but think and speak *within* the framework of a particular time and culture. It is true enough that *as God* Christ suffered no cultural limitations, but it is equally true that such limitations are essential to human nature as omniscience is to divine nature. Nor is it sufficient to juxtapose Christ's human nature to his divine nature: the two were synthesized in one person. The First Lateran Council (649) used the expression "two wills harmoniously united" (Dz 263) to establish the full autonomy of Christ's human nature, not to inflict upon the faithful the absurdity of a dual consciousness, ultimately opposed to the Ephesian doctrine on the one person in Christ.

Catholics usually avoid this problem by adopting some pragmatic version of docetism: they restrict the human nature of Christ to the biological functions of his body, while they treat all his other activities as if they were purely divine. But if Christ preserved the specific character of human nature, as the Council of Chalcedon clearly states (Dz 148), then I do not see how the notion of an omniscient Christ unbound by any cultural limitation can escape contradiction. I also wonder what then the Gospel of Luke means when it states: "As Jesus grew up, he advanced in wisdom." (Lk 2, 52)

Man's relation to God can be expressed only within a particular language, that is, an interpreted set of symbols. This holds true even if the Man who expresses this relation is also God. The creation of symbols is essentially a human task. Man alone uses symbols and symbolic expression is the most distinctive trait of his embodied spiritual nature. This remains true even for divinely inspired Scripture. The divine inspiration allows man to view reality in a special religious way and to express this insight adequately. It can never dispense him from creating the symbols himself. Only man can speak the language of man.

Through the Incarnation God is able to speak to man from person to person, but the language is human and bears the mark of a particular person who lived in a particular culture. One does not improve the mystery of revelation by eliminating or minimizing this human element, for on this element depends the entire meaning. Some of Christ's followers in later ages may have brought out aspects of his message which could neither have been conceived nor expressed during his lifetime. The hypostatic union does not necessarily imply that the man Jesus was able to understand and express this union in all its inexhaustible fullness. Christ is absolutely authoritative in *what* he expressed and in that it was *He*, the God-man, who expressed it. But his particular way of expressing it is, as all expression, co-determined by individual and cultural characteristics.

The Historicity of the Gospel

The same is even more true of the reports of Jesus' words and deeds in the Gospels. The Gospels possess a unique authority not because of their historical accuracy or their depth of theological insight but because their vision of Jesus' teachings and doings is an inspired expression of the faith of the original Christian community.

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Whether all the details are historical or not, whether the theological insight is profound or not, is irrelevant. The story of the second coming in Mt. 24 shows that even at the time of writing the Evangelists were still very confused on some parts of Christ's message. However, the authority of the Gospels is not based on historical or theological qualities but on the faith of those who read it as an authentic expression of God's revelation in Christ.

Historical determinations also restrict the proclamations of the Church's magisterium. Each dogma shows the mark of the cultural conditions in which it was formulated. Often no correct interpretation of an authoritative document can be given without a good deal of information on the historical—and very contingent!—circumstances in which it was issued. The Council of Vienne (1311-1312) condemned Peter John Olivi's doctrine that "the substance of the rational, intellectual soul is not truly and by its own nature the form of the human body" (Dz 481). To an uninitiated reader this must appear to canonize Aristotle's hylemorphic psychology or, at the very least, to condemn a plurality of psychological "forms." Historical research alone reveals that the issue at stake was not Aristotle or the unity of the psychological form (both rejected by many of the participating Fathers) but the substantial unity of the person of Christ, which Olivi's loose concept of the unity of man might jeopardize.

In other documents the response lies so much buried in the particular controversy which provoked it that even historical research does not enable us to determine its exact import. The Fourth Lateran Council states that God created the world "from the very beginning of time" (Dz 428). Does this mean that the universe has existed only for a finite number of years or is it merely a rejection of the Albigensian doctrine that the "creation" of the world was preceded by centuries of an "uncreated" (which means in their vocabulary, *unredeemed*) existence? Or what is the meaning of the Fourth Constantinopolitan Council's condemnation of Photius' "error" that man has two souls, when all we know about him is that he explicitly adopts the opposite thesis in his work (Dz 338)?

The words of Christ and the basic directions of his Church guide man authoritatively in his relations with God. To question their way of viewing this relation would be tantamount to rejecting the entire message of Christ. But the symbols in which this view or, in phenomenological terms, this *intentionality* is expressed are, as all human symbols, determined by a cultural tradition. This is not to say that they are false or even inadequate. If a revelation is to take place at all, the symbols in which it is expressed must have at least that minimum adequacy which enables them to transmit the message effectively to later generations. But beyond that, every generation has the task of capturing the message of the revelation anew.

The difficulty, however, is to distinguish intentionality from expression. A symbolic expression is not a disposable form wrapped indifferently around a content. Man *thinks in* symbols and, as Cassirer and his followers have shown, the content of his conscious activity does not preexist its symbolic expression. Without expression there is no intentionality at all. It is, therefore, insufficient to assume that the intentionality of revelation and of authentic magisterium is divinely determined, whereas the expression is not. This over-simplification seems to be inherent to the concept of *demythologization*. If symbolic form and content are so intimately united, it is impossible to separate the "mythical" form of Scripture from its content. The concept also seems to suffer under a latent rationalism by pre-supposing that the demythologized expression will be religiously more adequate than the "mythical" one.

Even so, Form Criticism deserves much credit for having made the first serious attempt to integrate revelation into the evolutionary process of history without abandoning its uniquely religious character. Most Christians avoid the mistakes of Form Criticism only by ignoring or denying all human autonomy in the symbolization of the Bible. They do not seem to realize that the meeting of the divine and the human in one act requires more initiative on man's side than that of a secretary taking a dictation.

In giving expression to God's revelation man is as creative as he is in building the world. A biblical author's individual and cultural qualities and limitations account not only for his literary style but also for the intellectual quality and even the religious depth of his work. Inspiration does not eliminate the creativity (good or bad) of a literary work; it merely guarantees that this work is an authoritative expression of an original religious impulse.

But this intimate mingling of divine inspiration and human creativity makes the question all the more urgent: How must Christianity develop so as not to betray its original message? How can we separate the relative from the absolute? The old theories claim that development consists merely in making explicit what is implicit and that nothing basically new is ever introduced. In his remarkable study *The Future of Belief*, Leslie Dewart convincingly shows how inadequate this explanation is. Yet, I am not sure that his own solution, interesting as it is, is altogether sufficient. He states that truth is achieved *in* conceptualization but not *by means* of any given determinate concept (p. 110). But the difficulty is that Christians have always considered the "conceptualization" (I would prefer the term *symbolization*) of *Scripture and authentic tradition* as different from any other conceptualization of a religious experience, even from that of other (non-inspired) religious witnesses of the same original Christian community.

Why, for instance, are the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Didache* not authoritative while the *Second Letter of Peter* is, even though it may be later in date and not more religious in content? The question itself proves that inspiration and authority cover not only the factual con-

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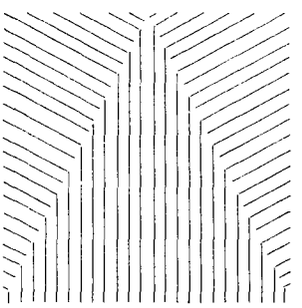
tent but also the phrasing and interpretation of this content. The Christian's faith is based not merely upon the facts reported in the Scripture but also upon the Scripture's special way of looking at these facts, which alone makes them into *religious* facts. If then the sources of the Christian religion are interpretations of facts rather than mere statements of facts, any further evolution of doctrine must keep in close touch also with the basic *interpretations* of the Christian tradition (starting with the New Testament writings).

To say that "Christianity was a *mission*, not a *message*," as Dewart does (p. 8), is not entirely correct. Christianity may not have a doctrine (that is, a systematic body of knowledge), but it definitely has a message. Scripture is not merely "the report of an event that happens"; it also provides the authoritative interpretation of that event. A basic question, then, for any theory of a future development of the religion based upon that interpretative report is how far the meaning of the interpretation can be stretched without losing its identity. Until that question is answered we can freely "develop" the message of Christianity (as Hegel did quite successfully), but we will never know whether our development is still Christian.



From a Christian point of view, all speculation preceding that answer remains hypothetical, or, in Kierkegaard's words, "a project of thought" about which one must suspend one's final judgment. The most radical interpreters of the past, like Spinoza, Lessing and Strauss, very much realized the need for a prior evaluation of the basic meaning and authority of the Scripture and concentrated most of their efforts toward reinterpretation on these two points.

The relatively small consideration which Dewart gives to the problem of Scriptural and traditional authority may be due to the fact that, for him, religious truth (like any other truth) is defined as a conceptualization of *experience*. But is it sufficient to say that "Christian belief is a religious *experience*" (p. 113)? To the believer faith is always considerably more than a religious *experience*. An objective experience is experience *only to the extent that it grasps its object*, whereas the object of the religious act remains mostly transcendent to the experience. This is the very reason why the religious message has to be *revealed*. It is also the reason why the original expression of the message must be more than the "conceptualization of an experience." The symbolization of Christianity and its evolution cannot be determined by the experience alone because it expresses more than a mere experience. Any renewal, then, in the symbolic expression of the religious intentionality must be made in close continuity with its original, determining expression in Scripture and early tradition.

However, this must not be understood as a call for traditionalism. The basic fallacy of traditionalism is that it detaches tradition from the living experience in which alone this tradition becomes meaningful. The traditionalist confuses the indispensability of the original expression with an absoluteness that no expression can ever possess. This confusion is caused by the strange idea that the divine eliminates *ipso facto* any sort of relativity. But Scripture, even though divinely inspired, is *not* God: human language excludes any possibility of a full manifestation of God. The traditionalist somehow seems to think that the revelation is able to reserve its *absolute* character only by freezing symbols into unnatural, immutable forms. But it is a mistake to expect that an expression will convey the supernatural just because the natural characteristics of expression have been eliminated.

Still, it is easier to criticize traditionalism than to answer the question: How can the symbolic expression ever allow of any real development if the divine inspiration extends to the *wording* itself. The Christian seems to be caught in a dilemma. If he abandons the original symbols, he must also abandon the verbal inspiration which is the very guarantee of religious truth, and if he keeps these symbols immutable, he stifles the living spirit which they are to express.

To handle this problem adequately would require a more fundamental discussion of the nature of religious symbolism than can be given here. I will merely point out that religious symbols are much more flexible than those of scientific or even ordinary language, because their inability to express the fullness of their transcendent content makes the connection between the expression and the expressed less tight. Even compared to its nearest in kin, the aesthetic image, the religious symbol stands in a much looser relationship to its content. The aesthetic image fully, although inexhaustibly, expresses what it symbolizes, while the religious symbol always falls short of what it expresses. This deficiency is not due to an absence of precise meaning. As all other symbols, the religious symbol conveys an immediate, intrinsic meaning, for example, that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit but, unlike other symbols, it attempts to attain through this obvious meaning a content that cannot be directly expressed.

The religious experience therefore lives in a constant tension with its forms of expression and at its highest moments tends to dismiss these forms altogether as insufficient. This basic ambiguity is what makes religious lan-

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guage so unscientific even when it attempts to be scientific. But it also enables religious symbols to develop organically and to renew themselves from within, while scientific symbols can only be discarded as soon as there is a basic shift in signification.

As early as the second and third centuries, Christians realized this polyvalent nature of the sacred expression and discovered a great variety of "allegorical" interpretations of the Bible. It was their simple way of capturing meaning beyond expression. This approach is no longer satisfactory, for it replaces one expressed meaning by another one that is just as clearly expressed. Strangely enough, the Alexandrian commentators did not pause to wonder why the biblical author could not give the second meaning himself if they were able to express it so clearly. The disconcerting use of biblical quotations in medieval scholarship to prove or disprove a thesis is another illustration of the same phenomenon (although the custom antedates Christian times). Even expressions meant to be purely "scientific" gradually obtain this religious flexibility. The concept of *trans-substantiation*, originally intended to explain Christ's presence in the Eucharist by means of Scholastic terminology, acquired throughout centuries of Christian tradition a religious meaning which still speaks even to those who long ago stopped thinking in terms of substance and accident.

I therefore think that it would be wrong (granted that it would be possible within the tradition) to abandon a notion that has become a religious symbol more than a scientific concept. Its religious transformation leaves the term so scientifically vague that theologians have sufficient freedom of interpretation, whereas a new definition would simply be another attempt to fix a datum of revelation in precise philosophical terms.

Because of the flexible nature of religious symbols, evolution *can* take place without any abandonment of traditional symbolism. Insofar as the symbols are part of the revelation, they *must* be retained if contact with the original message is to be preserved. However, the traditional character of revealed religion by no means implies that no new symbols ought to be created beside the old ones. Since the *experience* of the transcendent is always expressed in terms of the *self* and the *universe* that is being transcended, modern man's entirely different outlook on both compels him to look for new religious symbols in order to retain or restore the meaning of the old ones. Science, philosophy and theology may help him in this discovery. But the creation of religious symbols is ultimately the task of the religious man himself and of the religious community. The reason why the writings of Teilhard de Chardin have proven so fertile in new religious language is that they express above all a religious experience.

At the end of this argument we must face an objection that could be raised. The problem was how to reconcile two seemingly contradictory theses connected with any theory of divine revelation. On the one hand, all symbolic expression is essentially human and therefore subject to a basic evolution. On the other hand, revelation extends to the expression as well as the content (since both are inseparably united) and therefore the expression must remain authoritative as long as revelation itself.

Against the proposed solution of a development *within* the revealed (or authoritative) expression, supported by a creation of new symbols, some will object that in this evolution *either* the symbolic expressions expand their meanings but still preserve the original ones (and then we merely have a development from the implicit to the explicit as in all previous theories), *or* the symbolic expression loses its original meanings altogether but preserves the expressive form (and then we develop a radically new form of Christianity behind the facade of the original expression).

I would answer that the second interpretation must definitely be rejected because the basic reason for preserving the original expression is precisely that they capture a *meaning content* which would be lost in a different expression. As to the first interpretation, evolution is much more than explicating the implicit. To interpret the creation myth in Genesis, the story of the magi in Matthew, or the description of Christ's second coming in the synoptics in other than a literal sense is to leap to a new meaning in and through the old one.

Is it possible to go even further, beyond tradition, and to envision the possibility of new *beginnings?* If the last words of revelation were written in the first century or shortly thereafter, then only development of the tradition is possible. But are we willing to accept the conclusion that even for those who will live one million years from now, no new revelation will have occurred? Christians know that even now God's Spirit is actively present in the Church, urging its members to explore new horizons. But his light has traditionally been understood to illuminate only a message delivered in times past. Also, the living contact with Christ in the sacraments is always interpreted as referring to the events and words of his life in a historical past: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.* Could epiphanies only occur in the past, and has God really spoken his final word in this world? Could there ever be a new Pentecost?

Maybe the early Christians lived too much toward the future. But perhaps it is our self-satisfied aversion to change of the *status quo* that makes us look exclusively to the past. Christ promised that those who have faith in him would do greater things than he had done (Jn. 14, 12). Is all this already behind us? Orthodox Christian tradition has never asked these questions; in fact it has positively discouraged Catholics from asking them (see the decree *Lamentabili,* Dz 2021). But a reflection upon Christianity as an historical language of God can hardly avoid raising them, for history has a future as well as a past.

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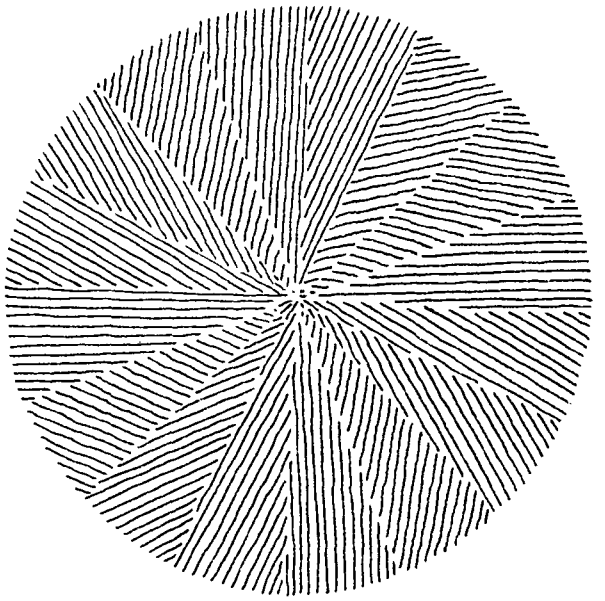

The inadequacies of the classical concept of God are borne out not so much by that part of Christendom that has ceased to believe, as by that which continues to do so. The believing remnant of Christendom has schizophrenically divided against itself.

GOD AND THE SUPERNATURAL

LESLIE DEWART

The classical Christian concept of God has endowed him with transcendence of, and at the same time immanence in, creation. In part this has reflected an essential truth of Christian religious experience. But the specific meaning given to it by classical Christian speculation—transcendence and immanence being so understood that they were conceptually opposed to each other, yet mysteriously reconcilable in God himself—has reflected only a specific, contingent conceptualization of the Christian faith in the cultural forms of a specific, contingent historical situation.

In St. Thomas' metaphysical (hence, hellenistic) philosophy, for instance, this opposition was implicit in the twofold doctrine that although "what the intellect first conceives is being and being-ness (*essentia*)," Being, He Who is, "is the most proper" name of God. God is so truly being that he is Being Itself—and yet, we learn the "name" being not in any way from God but from creatures. The doctrine of analogy tries to rationalize this with the assertion that, in effect, "names" learnt only from creatures are truly applicable to God if only we confess, as we apply them to God, that they are not actually applicable to God. But the attempt scarcely succeeds: we know that God is Being—yet we do not know what God is. This ancient contradiction has not been resolved by the claim of some neo-Thomists (both absurd and quite un-Thomistic, as Maritain has shown), that God has no whatness—that is, no essence, no being-ness—though he truly *is* Being.

But the real difficulty with this doctrine is hardly that it has created insoluble academic problems; it has rather to do with the growing inadequacies of the classical concept of God for the real-life needs of the Church. For despite original advantages this understanding of God has shared the fate of all conceptualizations of the Christian faith: its deficiencies have become increasingly apparent and, in the end, intolerable. Western Christendom's division against itself, its schizophrenic apostasy (so well described by Toynbee) from its own religion, the paradox that Western Christendom no longer professes as a whole the belief that even today continues to animate it culturally and to describe it historically—this is the best illustration of how the mere inadequacies of an originally adequate concept of God have been allowed, through lack of suitable redevelopment, to degenerate to a scandalous point.

Apologists may suggest, of course, that the unbelief of the modern Christian world has to do not with the inadequacies of Christian concepts but with the world's moral degeneration. There may well be some truth in the second part of the claim. But to suppose that modern unbelief is wholly attributable to moral failure is not self-evident—and we must be careful not to argue circularly that the modern world's unbelief proves its immoral character. Nor does this opinion take account of the increased moral sensibility of man as he has developed culturally—whether or not he has actually abided by the morality of which he has become increasingly conscious as he has become more civilized. Nor is this view easily reconciled with the largely intellectual character of some of the causes of unbelief—for instance, the typical scientific attitudes. Nor does this apology recognize that *some* of the world's moral reasons for disbelief in the Christian God are at least partly valid in concrete

LESLIE DEWART *is professor of philosophy at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. He is the author of the much acclaimed book* The Future of Belief *(Herder and Herder).*

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cases—for instance, among those of rebellion against inhumanities perpetrated, with utter sincerity, in behalf of God.

In any event, the inadequacies of the classical concept of God are borne out not so much by that part of Christendom that has ceased to believe, as by that which continues to do so. For the believing remnant of Christendom too, has schizophrenically divided itself against itself. It has managed to preserve orthodoxy, but only at the cost of severing faith from ordinary, everyday life. Thus, we *confess* the true God, both immanent and transcendent. But in real life we find it very difficult—often impossible—to *live* the contradiction, to "hold on to both ends of the chain, confident that the two are joined, out of our sight, in God himself." Impaled on a dilemma whose nature and reality we do not always recognize, we instinctively opt for the "safer" extreme. And so, our contemporary belief typically bears, in effect, only upon a transcendent God. We continue to believe in an immanent God, to be sure, and to do so sincerely—but only ineffectively. We confess it, but we do not *mean* what we confess.

This does *not* mean that by sin we deny practically our belief in God, or that we fail to live up to the moral requirements of what we actually believe. It means that there is a gap between what we simply *admit* to be true, and the truth we spontaneously *engraft* into our experience, our creativity and our collective life. The existence of this gap, I believe, is the only possible conclusion to be drawn from the history of the Church since the beginning of the modern world—and particularly from the Church's abdication of its responsibility to provide *effective* leadership to a mankind but recently embarked upon the task of consciously creating its own history, (an abdication, I happily add, in some indeterminate measure withdrawn since Vatican II). For each different way—and there have been many—in which Christians have held the world in contempt, distinctively constitutes a living rejection of the immanence of God. Not only our readiness to convict the world of sin, sometimes prematurely and usually with indecent haste, but also our consignment of the world to perdition on account of whatever true, real and unrepented sin it may bear: what does this amount to, but to a living act of faith in the absolute absence of God from the world? What does it mean but that Christians have, in effect, believed that when man kills God, God does not rise again?

The classical concept of God has become *unviable*. It can no longer enter fully and integrally into the life of believers themselves. It is cold comfort to warm ourselves with the thought that we have avoided every naturalism, every scientism, rationalism and pantheism, if we have not effectively avoided every supernaturalism. Indeed, we have not even feared it as a grave danger: we have tended to assume that it is impossible to err in this direction. But the contemporary difficulties of the Christian faith suggest otherwise. Let us attempt to trace the difficulty to its root.

A Spiritual Kingship

The heart of the Christian Gospel was Jesus' proclamation that Israel's messianic hope had been realized in him: He, Jesus, was the Christ. But Jesus maintained that his advent had not merely realized the Jewish hope; it had in a sense also transcended it. He was indeed the expected King. But his kingship was not quite of the sort that had been expected: it was "not of this world," or of Israel alone. It was a spiritual and catholic kingship. Therefore, the *Christian* Kingdom of God had a distinctive character: it was not merely the morally ideal way of life anticipated by Judaism, but a new way of life not previously available to man. It was not simply a *better* way in which ordinary human existence could be exercised: it was a *new* way to be. This is why the Gospel proclaimed a New Covenant, a new age in man's relations with God. In this new age God offered to man the possibility of existing at a level of existence other (and indeed nobler and more perfect) than that which man *already* had. Hence, the "spiritual" Kingdom of God was no mere continuation of "fleshly" human life with but its evils and imperfections removed. It was literally a "new life." To have entered into it was truly to have been "born again." By baptism into the new Israel the Christian became a "new man," one who had "died" to the "flesh" and "risen with Christ" to the "spiritual life." Like St. Paul, every Christian could say: "with Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me."

But it must be remarked that the "new life" was offered to man only through the saving events, the "mysteries" of the Incarnation and Redemption. The Christian Gospel of the "new life" supposed, in the first place, that the Kingdom instituted by the Christ Jesus differed from that expected by Israel only because the Christ of the Gospel was *not merely* a Christ. Jesus was no mere champion sent by God; he was the epiphany of God himself. Clearly, then, the Gospel implied a new self-revelation of God. In the New Testament God was not only the creator and protector of man but, more fundamentally, self-gift or self-communication: *Deus caritas est*. The Incarnation and the Redemption meant that God had *literally* given himself to man.

This affirmation had a twofold weight. In the first place, it is literally true that God *gives* himself to us. But it is also literally true that he gives *himself* to us. If so, when God, by manifesting himself to us in Jesus, reveals himself to us as self-communication, he reveals not simply what he is *for us*, but also what he is *for himself*. (Thus, the doctrine of the Incarnation and Redemption implied the doctrine of the Trinity: the different ways or "modes" in which God relates himself *to us* are the truly

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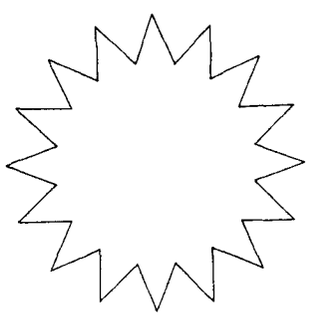
distinct—and even, in hellenic terms, separately "subsistent"—ways in which he is related *to himself*. This must be true if the God who comes to man in the Incarnation is "true God," with no part of his divinity held back from man—i.e., there are *only* three "persons" in the one divine nature of God). In brief, God's gift of himself to us is identical with his offer of the possibility of a *"new* life" over and beyond the life we *already* had. But why is it the possibility of a "new *life*?"

The existence every man *already* has when he is called by the Gospel is in a very real sense a gift *from* God. In fact, for the Christian, existence *means* most fundamentally this: God's original and gratuitous gift of being to being, God's uncaused gift to being of *itself*. But this gift from God is not God himself: it is being, existence. It is God's gift of being, not God's gift of himself. The difference between the "new life" and the "old" is not that only the first is a gift from God: existence means gift from God, and gift from God means existence. On the other hand, there is a difference between the "new life" and the "old": the "old" life is *already* had when the "new" is given. This is precisely what opens up the possibility that the "new life" be not merely a gift from God, but God's yet more gratuitous gift of himself. In other words, God's gift of himself and his offer of a "new life," are identical because his gift of himself to man is of the order of existence: it means that henceforth God lives within man. Therefore, when man *receives* God within himself he accepts God's offer to participate in the life of God himself.



Evidently, God cannot create a being without giving it being. Nothing forbids it: it is simply that to create being and to *give* being are the same. Thus, God need not create being—but if he does create being, *ipso facto* he gives it being. For instance, if man is a being, he *already* exists. But to be already existing is to *have* existence—which is not the same as to *have received*, that is, *accepted*, existence. The gift of that sort of existence which man already has when he is called by the Gospel, is a gift from God that can only be given: it cannot be received. This means that God can create man without giving him more than being: God need not give himself to man, even after man already exists. But if, on the other hand, God *does* give himself to man, then the gift is, in a true sense, the gift of a new mode of existence—but because man already exists, this mode of existence must be received, accepted, or else God cannot give himself to man.

In the idea that the root meaning of all existence is that of a gift from God, that there is no meaning to existence except that of being a gift from God, but that the existence man already has when called by the Gospel is (though truly given) a gift that cannot be actually received, for being does not already exist before it is given existence—in this idea we find the reason why, to the Christian faith, being as such does not acquire a necessary relation to God through creation, but remains always, even after it exists, totally contingent and historically factual. And even man, who is conscious of existence, who is existence aware of itself, cannot, simply as conscious being, *receive* existence from God unless God gives himself to him. But because he is present to himself man can *recognize* that existence is a gift he holds from God: this recognition is, by another name, the experience of the contingency of being *as such*. It is man's recognition that he holds existence gratuitously, without reason—"superfluously," if you wish—and that he truly holds it having never had the opportunity to turn it down before it was given.

To sum up: if *existence* is essentially the same as *gift from God*, the gift offered by God to a conscious being which already exists, is literally, not metaphorically, the offer of a new, additional level of existence. Conversely, this new mode of existence is, precisely as "new," as obtaining over and beyond the mode of existence already held by man, definable as participation in the life of God himself. This is possibly only because God gives himself to us in his true reality: the "new man" lives, as such, by the life of God himself, a life gratuitously communicated to him by God himself. And since the "new man" lives, as such by the life of *Another* living in him, his "new life" is *not a substitute* for the "old" life—except in one most important respect. For it is clear that as to moral effects, the "new life" must indeed replace the old. Hence, the Christian loves—or should love—his neighbor for the love of God. This does not mean that he must love his neighbor in order to deserve God's love. It means that God's self-gift to man creates the *obligation*, and confers the efficient *power*, for man to rise to the historical occasion created by the events of the Incarnation and Redemption: the vocation to imitate God through his free decision to define himself, to reveal himself to himself in actual, conscious existence as self-communication, self-gift.

Needless to say, the Christian faith I have rendered above, as I hope, in fidelity to the spirit of the Gospel but in concepts which reflect contemporary experience, could have been rendered during the formative centuries of Christian dogma, or even during the Scholastic period, only in a hellenic conceptual form. This was, of course, not only legitimate (and, in any event, unavoidable) but also most advantageous for the Christian faith. (For

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instance, the Trinitarian formulation of the novel Christian belief in God was made possible by the adoption—and, to be sure, the adaptation—of hellenic philosophical categories.) But this historical development also contained potential difficulties which, as they appeared, should have been disarmed. Unfortunately, circumstances conspired. In the end, they were compounded instead.

As has been implied above, every conceptualization of the Christian belief in the "new life" must be relative to a prior conceptualization of the "old." Gentile Christianity, which as a whole was culturally hellenistic, could not have conceived the "old" existence, the life that man already has when he is called to "conversion" and "rebirth," except as a *natural* one. And this, of course, had corresponding consequences for its understanding of the nature of the "new life."

To the Greek mind nature accounted intelligibly for the actions of a natural being only in terms of an inner necessitation. For every being acts strictly in accordance with what it is—and a being is what its essence determines it to be. But what a being is essentially, is that which it is necessarily in order to be intelligible—on the assumption, following Parmenides, that intelligibility was the condition of the possibility of existence. (Indeed, it was identical with that possibility: "that which can be and that which can be thought are the same.") Nature, therefore, accounted *exhaustively* for a being's operations, since a being's essence accounted for what it was necessarily as intelligible and, therefore, as being. Free human actions, for instance, were both intelligible and possible only because they were *natural* operations. They were free not because they were unnecessitated (which would have made them unintelligible and hence impossible), but because they were *self*-necessitated. But this implied that free human actions could proceed *only* from human nature: they could be attributed only to that which (by definition) could be the only intrinsic principle of human operations—namely, human nature. Conversely, any principle other than nature could be the source of human operations only as an extrinsic principle of necessitation —and this was (by definition) a source of *violence*. In short, human behavior was either necessitated naturally —in which case it was free—or else it was necessitated from without—in which case it was coerced.

Grace and Freedom

It is instructive to note that the problem of grace and freedom was preceded by a period during which Christian speculation was bent upon maintaining a truer and more radical idea of human freedom than that of contemporary philosophy—and that this was conceptualized, however, in terms of maintaining the autonomy of nature. Christian thought easily apprehended its fundamental opposition to the Greek philosophical attitude towards the human situation, particularly that of the Stoics and Epicureans. Hence, it was bound to emphasize the utter reality and puissance of man's freedom, and the benevolence of a God who did not subject man to Fate. Christians admitted that there was a Providence, quite as the Stoics said. But Pro-vidence was not the fore-seeing power that frustrated man's freedom; it was not the supreme principle of natural necessitation, indifferent to man and human striving, to which man must, however unhappily, intelligently submit under pain of greater unhappiness still. Providence was rather God's wise, benevolent, loving and helpful guidance of creation towards its final achievement. But when this doctrine, not illogically, issued in the conclusions of Pelagius, it was necessary on the contrary to emphasize that the life of grace (implying, for instance, a call to an end that man could not merit or achieve by nature) could not be brought about by the efficiency of the operations posited by human nature as such. Otherwise the life of grace would have been indistinguishable from the state of human perfection to which Stoic and Epicurean philosophy naturally led through intellectual and moral *askesis*. But to emphasize this, once the Greek conception of nature was assumed, was in effect to emphasize that in a very real sense Providence *was* a sort of Fate. Man, therefore, was in a sense truly fated or predestined. Having accepted the terms in which the problem naturally posed itself to Christianity's hellenic mind, Christian thought doomed itself to assert thereafter that *somehow* man was both free and predestined, that God was *somehow* the cause of Fate and nevertheless the friend of man.

The *somehow* has never been satisfactorily explained. This would not have been too unfortunate if it had been actually possible for Christian thought to "hold on with equal firmness to both ends of the chain." And the process was far from complete when St. Augustine wrote his last anti-Pelagian word. If, to repeat, one can understand the "new life" of Christian belief only in relation to one's prior understanding of the "old," then the assumption that the "old" life was a "natural" one potentially contained more than the foregoing problem of the opposition between grace and freedom. It also implied that any reconciliation of the two should be based upon an understanding of the "new life" as functioning in essentially the same way as nature did, albeit without actually being an integral part of nature. The "new life" was not a substitute for nature—on the other hand, it was not unnatural. Conversely, it was non-natural—but nonetheless it was somewhat like nature. Its nature, as it were, was that of a nature which was not natural. Hence, it was a sort of second nature, a nature over and above human nature. It was, in the Scholastic expression devised *ad hoc*, man's *super-nature*. The "new life" communicated by God was a *super-natural* life.

The supernatural life of grace was, therefore, truly a sort of nature. It was, to be sure, a *super*-nature. It was, nonetheless, a (super) *nature*. Therefore, to the extent

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that the life of grace became a super-*natural* life, it was no longer identical with man's participation in the life of God living within him. It would have been unthinkable, of course, actually to deny that man did so participate. But the "new life" was not itself such participation: it was the *means* whereby such participation could obtain. Thus, a distinction obviously suggested itself: on the one hand, uncreated Grace, which was the life of God himself insofar as it included the act by which he gave himself to man; on the other, created grace, which was a created reality, a second nature (both in the sense that it presupposed nature, and in the sense that it was a "habit" rather than a substantial nature), a super-nature which so modified man's substantial nature that he could achieve, through its efficiency, what he could not achieve by nature alone.

The traditional belief that by grace man participated in the divine nature was thus retained, but considerably weakened. In his meaningful religious experience the Christian no longer sought God himself—at least not in this life. He sought grace, an insubstantial ectoplasm flowing from above, a spiritual coin issued by God *ex opere operato* and certified as legal moral tender by the decrees of Providence. Man's acceptance of supernatural life no longer meant literally that "I live, no not I; but Christ liveth in me." It did not convey that man had risen to a new level of *existence*. It simply meant that a certain quality—given from God, but not itself God—now qualified inwardly (but proceeding from without) the powers of nature with a perfection which was not due to nature but which enabled nature, precisely as supernaturally perfected, to attain a supernatural end.

Moreover, since it occurred only through the *means* of grace, participation in the life of God now referred to a God who was not immediately present to man. (It was also thought that an immediate participation would be dangerously near to Pantheism—as it would indeed be, on the continued assumption of the hellenic concepts of nature and being.) In fact, God was not *effectively* present to man, immediately or otherwise: the presence of God was still affirmed, but it did not necessarily have a meaningful role in Christian religious experience. The operative note became God's transcendence. But, of course, transcendence was no longer understood as an attribute of God's immanence, his incommensurability with the being in which he lives and to which he is present. It was rather the incommensurability of creator and creature, the infinite distance between created being and uncreated Being. God's immanence was confessed, but no longer effectively believed in.

As Christianity's sense of God's immanence became dulled, as the Christian God receded into the infinity beyond, and as the experience of his presence was no longer facilitated by the immediately meaningful teaching of the Church or by the everyday institutions and practices of believers—and it should be noted that even the sacrament most directly concerned with the Real Presence tended to give less emphasis to the presence itself than to the metaphysical mechanism whereby that presence could be harmonized with a *hellenic* understanding of nature—as these things came to pass the Christian God became increasingly unbelievable. For, at the limiting case, a strictly transcendent God is both utterly unreasonable and thoroughly immoral; whereas, at the other extreme, a strictly immanent God may amount to no Christian God at all, but is not positively absurd and is at least superficially moral. In this way, to most science and philosophy, belief in the Christian God became synonymous with superstitious credulity; and to many of the dispossessed, institutional religion became the opium of the people. No doubt, these and like judgments of the modern world have been precipitate and undiscriminating. But it may be equally precipitate and undiscriminating to suppose that they have been altogether wrong.

Yet, if nature is not that which determines a being to act in accordance with its inner, immutable, constitutive principle of intelligibility but, on the contrary, that which emerges from the contingent history it undergoes (or the contingent history it creates, in the case of man), the level of existence to which man is called by the Gospel need no longer be super-natural. If so, the Christian God need not have a super-natural character which alienates him from man, and the Christian faith may again become directly relevant to real, everyday, present life.

God Enters History

The level of existence of fellowship with God to which the Gospel calls is not superimposed upon an independently evolving history of creation: it is the same level of existence as that in which as a matter of fact creation evolves historically, but under the concrete, contingent, historical condition brought about by God's free decision to be present to creation and to take part in its history by making its history his home. Grace is, then, a historical fact: the irruption of God into man's history, a definitive and actual event within a merely possible event.

But this means that God does not reconcile in his private life the opposed transcendence and immanence of his cryptic public announcements. Therefore, he must be conceived as that which, though other than being, is revealed by and within being only because he is present to being. For the historicity of grace means that the "natural" order does not, as such, actually exist. But if, having reached this point by transcending the hellenic idea of nature, we were to proceed without transcending the hellenic idea of being, the conclusion would be inevitably reached that nothing which exists in reality is other than God.

Being exists—but God is present to it. God creates being—but he creates it in his presence. And, moreover, within the totality of being he brings forth the being to

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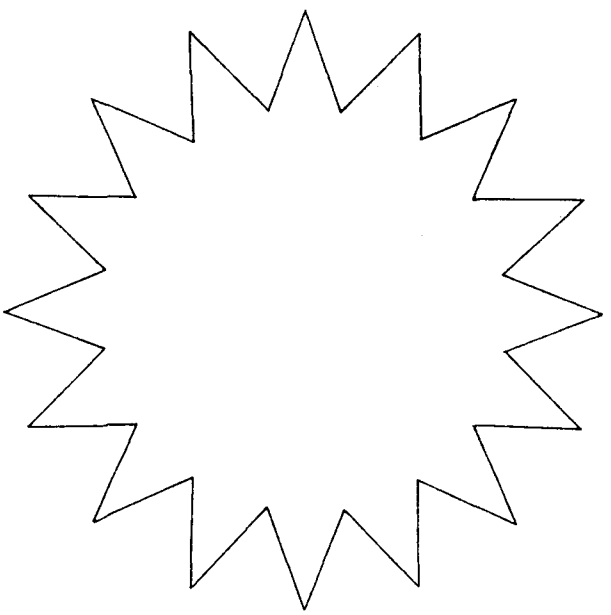
which he gives the power effectively to define itself, the power indeed truly to create itself—for this being is no longer simply being in relation to another, whether God or man, but being which is present to itself and, hence, being which exists in and for itself. To this being, God is freely present in a correlative way, namely, by giving himself, in his very reality, to it—hence, by offering himself to man so utterly gratuitously that he actually creates the possibility of being unaccepted, positively rejected by man.

Correspondingly, then, God is found *in* being, but only as that which is *other than* being. And it is indeed his presence *in* being that leads us *beyond* being. There is, thus, no infinite gap separating God from man—but there is an openness to being, and in this opening God stands. There is no distance between God and man: on the contrary, the God of the Gospel has come into the world in his true and utter reality, leaving nothing behind and, evidently, planning to stay. The Christian God is not elsewhere: he is always *here* and, therefore, he is always faithful, always he who abides, always *Yahweh,* he who remains present here and now with us. To sum up, the transcendence of the genuinely immanent God means this: if the God whom we find always *here* is not to vanish into thin air, if he is not to become an idol, if he is not to be reduced to the totality of being, and if he is not to be explained away as the becoming of the world or the projection of man—in a word, if the God who is actually *here* within being is the God of Christian tradition, it follows that he is not to be conceived as being.

To be sure, a whole *problematik* issues from this. But if the foregoing observations are correct this affirmation is not itself problematic; it is an empirically derived principle of investigation. This means: the history of Christian speculation about God suggests that henceforth the starting point of its quest should be, not the idea that although we do not experience God he must be nonetheless Being, but the observation that we do experience God, although evidently we do not experience him as being.



Just as the naturalist is engaged in broadening his view of human values, so the theist must engage in rethinking the meaning of God to include its human context. We need a corrected and deepened understanding of God's presence in human experience.

GOD AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

JAMES COLLINS

No philosophical discipline can stand still and yet claim to live. The requirement of keeping responsive to developments in the broader human setting and in the current level of philosophical thought is appropriately made upon the theory of God. As far as this part of philosophy is concerned, the most relevant part of its human setting has always been the trend of intellectual discussion among believers at a given time. Thus the philosophical theory of God is deeply affected by its twofold context, furnished both by the prevailing conditions in philosophical inquiry and by the reflections of theistic believers. I would like to consider here a curious phenomenon marking the relationship between these two components in the present American environment for the theory of God.

At least as viewed from my limited and corrigible perspective, there is a lack of full communication between the two conditioning factors just mentioned. On the one hand, philosophers have not yet had time to digest and evaluate the many efforts of inquiring believers to rethink their conceptions of God. The scope and significance of

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recent shifts in the attitude of theologians toward the problem of God are not yet fully realized and reflected in philosophical discussions of the issue. And yet there is a consistent tendency, on the part of many inquiring believers, to over-evaluate the philosophical impact of what they have done to date on the God problem. Here, there is a failure to realize that reorientations within the believing community itself are only a preliminary step toward contributing something significant to the general trend of philosophical speculation on God. I intend to concentrate upon this discrepancy in the mutual appraisal of the two components, because it affects the entire concrete effort today to philosophize about God. This is part of the real starting point for refounding a philosophical theology.

Philosophers seldom accept at face value the claims of other investigators concerning the philosophical implications of their work. A methodological pause is usually instituted in the face of any call by a physicist, a psychologist, or an anthropologist for a complete renovation of philosophy on the basis of some work he is doing. And a similar critical interval is quite properly interposed between philosophical discussion of God and all current religious recommendations of a new concrete theism. The reflective believer may well maintain that his position draws out the furthest implications of an acknowledged philosophical method or that it expresses a meaning of reality destined to overcome and transform all previous philosophical outlooks. But he must be prepared to have his statement treated, for quite a while, as a self-evaluatory act. Like other such acts in the several fields of research, it has to be estimated not just by its performance but primarily by the grounds adduced to support what it asserts. Only after these grounds are inspected, can the new proposals about theism begin to function effectively within the philosophical community.

Of course, there are reflective believers whose task is to philosophize about God, and it is this condition of partial interpenetration of interests which permits the comparison to be made and to have some larger significance for mankind. But one of the consequences of the maturation of philosophy in the modern world is that it follows its own tempo of response to challenges. Fresh variations on the theme of God which are quite decisive for the believing mind, including the believing philosopher, may have only a slight immediate resonance in the discussions that keep philosophy alive. The long range effect may be considerable, but it cannot be achieved by exaggerating the present impact of the theistic inquiries conducted in theological circles. The themes of the Biblical God of history or the death of God may well have important relevance for philosophical approaches to God, but the bearing will have to be shown in detailed argument and not presumed. To accept this requirement is one way of taking seriously the modern fact of the distinctive structure and growth patterns in philosophy.

There is an understandable personal, educational, and pastoral impatience to have the reforming suggestions of believers count a good deal in contemporary philosophizing on God. Yet to do so, these ideas must submit to the common conditions of scrutiny, the results of which cannot be easily summed up in textbooks for philosophy classes. This follows from the nature of the situation. Any proposed meaning of theism, especially as implying a religious response in the practical order, is bound to be very complex and difficult to analyze. It must be submitted to several diverse methods of analysis and judgment, theoretical and historical, leading inevitably to diversity of interpretation and evaluation. There is nothing peculiar about this pattern of investigation, since it is the prevailing method for reaching philosophical positions on any major topic. Furthermore, philosophers are still seeking to determine the logical theory and implications of biological and cultural evolution, with which the new theological views on God's presence in an evolving universe are intimately connected. The vast complexity of the philosophical effort to understand evolution will now be communicated to the proposal of correlating the meaning of God and divine presence in the world with evolutionary theory.

Atheism—Meaning—Evolution

As searchers after God, we can orient ourselves more closely on the present faith-and-philosophy relationship, if we will examine three areas where the energies of theistic believers are being expended, and yet where the philosophical outcome of the work is still cloudy. Much of the actual research centers around: the problem of atheism, the clarification of discourse and intentional meaning concerning God, and the theme of a creative divine purpose in evolution. I will consider these three endeavors at the general level of the progress they are making toward modifying the philosophical discussion of God, and the distance that still remains before they can become fully functional in philosophy. On this basis, there can be drawn a brief conclusion on the need to tighten the relationship between experience and inference in the theory of God.

The main thrust of recent studies of atheism centers around making the atheistic attitude understandable to believers. This is a step forward from the previous custom of concentrating upon the quite abstract issue of the possibility or impossibility of atheism, an approach dictated more by an interest in the question of imputability for one's view of God than by a direct concern with the actual testimony of atheistic thinkers. The strength of the newer treatment lies in the order of psychology, sociology, and the history of religious ideas. The structure of the atheistic attitude is better understood in the light of the discontents in psyche and society, to which atheism is now seen to be a creative human response. Especially in its nineteenth-century varieties, it is regarded as one member of a social and intellectual situation correlated with the his-

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torical forms of theology and church life in the same age.

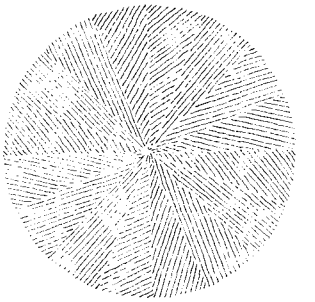
In the light of the notion of a definite correlativity between the theologies and the atheologies, believing investigators are inclined to revise their view of atheism along three lines. First, there is an admission of responsibility, at all levels of thought and social life, for the inadequate expressions of theism and the oppressive social conditions that have generated the atheistic response. Atheism is now regarded, not as an alien intrusion upon the sphere of Christian belief and sociality, but as an internally generated counterpart and corrective judgment.

From this conviction of sharing a common destiny flows a second aspect in the self-transformation of contemporary theism: a recognition of the human strength and rightness contained in a correlative atheism, with which the honest believer now finds a greater affinity than with the forms of theism and ecclesiology which were brought to judgment. Often this sense of complication and coeducation translates itself into a call for intellectual and social dialogue between Marxism and Christianity, a call responded to by Garaudy and other sensitive atheists. The participants are not regarded as antagonistic spokesmen for complete and exclusive systems, but somehow as joint seekers looking for the meaning of the human, in relation to a possible divine perspective.

A third strain in the contemporary believer's dynamism is a resolve to transcend the shortcomings in the previous theistic and atheistic interpretations of reality. In this task, a clue is taken from Nietzsche, whose greatness is seen more and more clearly to lie in his lifelong engagement with the symbiotic relationship between the theisms and atheisms of his century. Even apart from the symbolic role assigned to Nietzsche in the development of the death-of-God theme among theologians, his significance for our thinking about God arises from his suggestion that no radical renovation of our thinking about God is possible without basing itself upon a comprehensive questioning of the whole tradition of Western conceptions of being, knowing, and moral values. Theists are currently testing out, in a free and experimental manner, various ways of transforming these basal conceptions in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral philosophy. So far, the revaluations remain in the form of programmatic sketches of work that still remain to be executed in argumentative detail.

All these stirrings pivoted around a revised estimate of atheism are leading to observable modifications in the Christian awareness of this world and its ambivalences, in the appreciation of psychiatric and sociological research on the springs of belief and unbelief, and in more flexible alternatives in the social and political realms. As yet, however, these changes do not add up to a noticeable difference in the philosophical treatment of atheism by American philosophers. There is a potentiality for making a difference in philosophical thinking, but the gap is not yet bridged between transformations in the religious attitude and a new direction of philosophical argumentation. Until the religious transformation is able to restate its evidence in terms of the methods and arguments actually used in philosophy, there will be no change in the shape of the theory of God.

To remove the alien quality of much of the theological talk about atheism, it would be helpful to shift the focus of attention now from the dramatic atheistic attitude embodied in a Nietzsche or a Camus to the more undramatic forms of atheism found in many naturalistic and analytic



philosophers. Their approach does not conform with the pattern of an anti-Christian anti-theism, but rather depends on the use of methods leading to the unemphatic judgment that the divine reality, presumably signified by even a revised conception of God, is inevident to the ordinary inquirer. From such a perspective, none of the theistic analyses of the psychic, social, and theological conditions breeding a strongly felt atheistic attitude have altered the methodological and epistemological considerations confining our minds to the study of experienced nature and human society. A revision of the story about the genesis of theistic and atheistic outlooks does not add anything to the positive evidence, presentable in philosophical form, for maintaining the truth of affirmations about the reality of God.

Perhaps in order to meet this situation, theistic believers are taking a second look at the philosophy of John Dewey, on whom most of the naturalists are dependent. A sympathetic, and at times even a rhapsodic, reinterpretation is made of his general account of natural process and the generic traits of reality. Attention is centered upon his insight concerning man's actively evolving relationships with the living environment, as well as upon his reverent response to natural reality in all its modes. This is one philosophical locus where it is indeed possible to sharpen the problem of theism. As Dewey formulates it, the crucial question is whether all the values formerly enshrined in the affirmation of God can be transformed, without human loss, into a religious affirmation of nature and human development. Man's religious attitude can be redirected toward the complex values of experienced natural reality, and the meaning of the divine can be wholly interpreted in terms of this affirmation.

This is not simply a recognition of the values of mundanity and natural reality, within which human life joyfully develops. It is also a proposal that our religious re-

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sponse to reality can now sustain itself without including any theistic overtones, any affirmation of God as somehow distinct from experienced natural process. The discovery of natural temporal values on the part of the theistic humanist does not alter the point at issue. Dewey asks whether any good reasons can be furnished for accepting anything more than a religious suffusion of man's inquiring and appreciative intercourse with the rest of nature. Dialogue with him involves showing eventually that religious experience has a more determinate sense than that expressed in our striving with, and enjoyment of, this complexus of man in nature.

One way to meet this challenge is to suggest that, just as the naturalist is engaged in broadening his view of human values to include the religious quality of life, so the theist must engage in rethinking the meaning of God to include its human context. The urgency of discovering a more adequate philosophical conception of God is not based on a purely abstract debate but upon two pressing historical considerations. First, there is the exhibited incapacity of any theism-correlated-with-atheism to satisfy the religious searching and responses of humanity: to surpass these correlates is to look for fresh significance of the divine in human life. Secondly, the general philosophical situation has no more stayed frozen during our century than has that of belief and theology. But one responsibility of the theistic philosopher is to bring out the implications of new philosophical problems and methods for the theory of God. Whenever major advances are made in philosophical inquiry as a whole, they supply the opportunity and the means for attaining a corrected and deepened understanding of God's presence in human experience.

Since the aim of believing philosophers is to do their exploring with the resources of the centrally shaping philosophies of our time, they are making primary use of the analytic and phenomenological approaches. Just by itself, the deliberate experiment of trying to determine the theistic implications of these philosophies is a useful contribution. Neither the analytic nor the phenomenological method is inherently restricted to the development of but one conception of God. There is ample room in phenomenology for both Sartre and Scheler, and room in analytic circles for Flew and Ramsey. Yet the theistic possibilities are never automatically explicated, but require constant innovation by many minds. For a good while to come, it is likely that the reminting of the meaning of God will be conducted through diverse and well restricted lines of inquiry. It is premature to expect a fully articulated philosophical synthesis of theism to fill the present scene, whatever the theological and practical voices calling for it to come.

Nevertheless, some of the lines of investigation are being more firmly drawn. Analytic theists are making discernible a definite pattern and orientation in the religious use of ordinary language. They find that speakers imbued with the Bible and the life of faith make an extraordinary use of our everyday words and syntax, in order to express a distinctive relationship of the human self to the divine reality. The discriminate theistic talker is careful to distinguish the divine from every particular thing within sensible range, and yet to evoke an intimate, personal, and morally concerned presence of the divine among men. Discourse about God takes the form of a dramatic story, so that the theist may make a symbolic, pointing use of daily language and may suggest another level of interpretation for the happenings in history. God-talk properly tends to become halting and troubled in the face of powerful evil and suffering visited upon the innocent. Yet it always displays a leading and analogical quality, orienting the speaking and listening community toward hope in a God who is a caring friend. Whatever new meanings of God are to be forged, they must give primary consideration to these traits in our actual statements of theistic belief.

Emphasizing the intentional acts in which human reality develops itself, the phenomenological theists seek the foundation of this conception of God within human history. The growing convergence of analytic and phenomenological philosophies in general can be expected to strengthen their regional convergence upon a common significance of God. For just as the analysts are becoming more sensitive to the personal springs of discourse about God, so are the phenomenologists becoming increasingly interested in the theistic word, the linguistic actuation of human striving for the divine. Furthermore, both groups regard their findings as being reformative of our thinking about God and not just descriptive of it. In the degree that earlier conceptions of God did not somehow primarily correlate the divine reality with the interpersonal and historical community of men, they must be transformed by a meaning that does convey this emphasis and hence that is less unworthy of God.

It seems to me, however, that the philosophical status of such analytic and phenomenological studies of theism is still incomplete. They are philosophical in one sense, namely, that they submit the content of theistic belief and the Biblical message on God to interpretation through two recognized philosophical methodologies. This is a genuine contribution to the state of discussion about God, since it overturns the assumption that the testimony of faith and the Bible is irrelevant to the philosophical theory of God and cannot be brought within the philosopher's range. But in addition to showing that theistic belief is quite susceptible of contemporary reinterpretation, a philosophical approach to God must also ask about the evidential backing and humanly ascertainable truth of the conviction thus reformulated. The problem is not only that of determining an adequate meaning but also that of determining whether, on humanly inspected grounds, we must accept the truth claim made for the divine reality intended by the reformed meaning of theism. A thorough-

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ly philosophical approach to God must show that the theistic conviction is both expressive of the personal and social life of man, regarded in his intentional acts and linguistic patterns, and also judgmentally well founded in its affirmation of the divine reality itself.

Describing and Reforming

The analytic and phenomenological approaches to theism are not yet fully philosophical in character, insofar as they are reluctant to make the passage from a study of meaning to that of the ordinarily accessible bases for the judgment affirming the divine reality. Hence the distinction between a descriptive and a reformative function for their conception of God has a narrower import than might be supposed. The historical and interpersonal view of God does have a reformative role within the believing community's own patterns of thought and speech, but it does not yet furnish a broader reforming norm for determining the judgment of philosophers about the reality of God. From the standpoint of the philosophical community at large, this revised conception of God still remains in the descriptive order of particular meanings for the divine, and settles nothing about the validity of maintaining the reality of God himself. To deal with the question of valid judgment in respect to the divine reality, a metaphysical basis of our conception of God and our truth assertions about His actuality is required. Should Biblical theologians employ only the analytico-phenomenological approach to a theory of God, they would seriously underestimate the radical nature of contemporary philosophical questioning about God and the need to make a thorough metaphysical reconstruction of theism.

Sometimes, a quick detour is attempted around the tedious metaphysical argumentation by employing what we can call Heidegger's new-era strategy. This consists in making a drastic simplification and solidification of all philosophical procedures and principles, historically developed for the theory of God. They are all treated as so many variations upon the one defective way of conceiving knowledge, activity, and reality after the model of a dichotomy between subject and object, self and the world of things. A wholesale contrast is then drawn between the entire history of speculation on God and one's own favored conception of reality and the divine. The latter view is then designated as the radical principle of a new era of thinking, and every critical alternative on God is thereby relegated to the already overcome framework of the past.

Although this strategy seems to spike all the guns, it does not carry much conviction among philosophical workers. For it does considerable violence to the plural traditions in philosophical thought, as well as to that whole process of making careful distinctions in which the life of philosophy consists. Hence the new-era verdict represents a disruption of the fabric of philosophical work, rather than its future hope. The questions about the evidential basis for making assertions about the divine reality remain in force, and the theory of God moves effectively in other directions.

The Teilhardian and other varieties of evolutionary theism are attractive to many believers today, precisely because they bring some independent confirmation and can be related to scientific work that is actually going on. The conviction about a creative divine purpose enables theists to regard their belief not only as an elucidation of the Bible story but also as a powerful instrument for unifying and orienting the scientific accounts of the world. At the same time, evolutionary theism admittedly suffers from the nebulous condition of its doctrinal content and from a lack of reflection upon scientific methodology and theory formation, such as would permit it to determine the nature and limits of the collaboration between belief and evolutionary research.

The precise relationship between evolutionary theism and philosophy can be clarified, if two questions of definite contemporary interest will be considered. One of these concerns the epistemological nature of any general assertion of purpose in the evolving universe. Even after the rift is closed between phenomena and noumena and after the unified reality of nature is seen to be thoroughly evolutionary, the Kantian problem of purposive judgment remains relevant. It does not concern any fixed ends, laid down in a celestial decree and unfurled through the printed book of time. Bergson and Dewey have sufficiently criticized this conception of ends as being incompatible both with an evolutionary universe and with human dignity.

Rather, the problem is that of determining the meaning and range of purposive models of thought about nature, as well as of inquiring whether any implications can be drawn about the world itself and a divine agency therein.

Evolutionary Theism

A very wide range of positions is being maintained on this issue, reaching from a quite restricted use of telic models in some parts of biology and sociology to general proposals about teleonomy as a way of interpreting all the scientific and social findings. To become more reflective and philosophically interesting, evolutionary theism will have to relate its position to some pertinent alternative explanations. Is the notion of a divine purpose operating in the evolving universe anything more than a faith-generated extrapolation, made from the restricted model used to study the internal structure of a theistic moral and religious community of men? Does this concept serve well enough for human thinking about the vast transitions from energy to life to culture, but yet confuse our minds when it is converted into an ontological principle shaping the heart of reality? Or should we say, with the idealist

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philosophers Findlay and Harris, that the meaning of evolutionary purpose is indeed ontological and not solely hermeneutic, but that the reality in which the telic striving culminates is scientific and social mind as the reflective totalization of experience, and as being divine in no other sense? Only when theistic evolutionism allows itself to feel the bite of these specific questions, will it sharpen its own significance and achieve entrance into the philosophical world.

That process can be hastened by engaging in a second line of discussion, centering around Whitehead's proposals for the consistent application of evolutionary concepts to the divine consequent nature. Many theologians today are rediscovering the need for a metaphysically regulated natural theology, through the promptings of Whitehead on how to make theistic belief functional in an evolutionary and history-minded age. The issue concerns whether every instance of evolutionary theism must agree with his contention that becoming must be found in some real sense within God's own nature, if He is the supreme exemplification of the principles of reality and not a dubious exception to them. In the intimacy and mutuality of His relationship with the universe, God's consequent nature must involve finitude, care, and growth, so that the course of our tragic universe can make a difference in the divine life.

All this can be retranslated into Biblical language, but the pertinent question is whether the message of theistic belief and the Bible can be given any other philosophically significant rendering than the one proposed by Whitehead. Such a question cannot be handled simply by returning to the polarity between the Bible and theistic faith, or simply by pointing to something established or suggested in evolutionary sciences. It forces the theist to engage in independent metaphysical speculation, and thus it encourages the wider philosophical examination of evolutionary theism in all its modalities.

All the indications are that philosophy is operating today to nudge theistic belief from the mode of religious witness and Biblical exegesis into that of argument and inference concerning human experience. This persistent nudging—sometimes done gently and sometimes quite harshly—is indispensable to overcome the tendency of theistic believers to identify their convictions simply with those of humanity. Here is a striking instance of what Dewey identified as the inveterate habit of converting a desired ideal into a present actuality. Theists would like all men to share the belief in God and the acceptance of the Bible, but in fact the discussion of theism goes on in a world where the truth basis of theism must still be discussed and established in function of ordinary human inquiry.

Among theistic believers, a twofold clarification is needed in order to achieve full philosophical modalization

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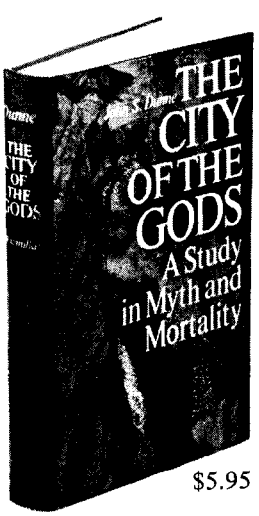

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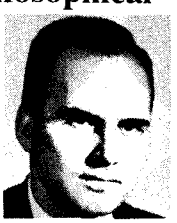

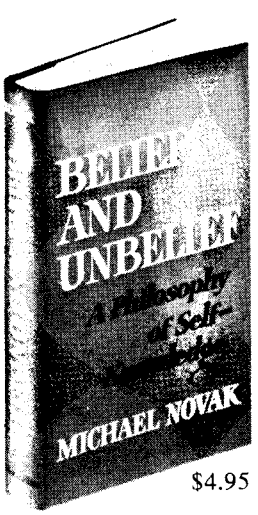

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Commonweal for '67

This February 10 issue is the first of "The Commonweal Papers," which we plan to publish occasionally for the benefit of our subscribers. It reflects the over-all range and pertinence of this widely-quoted, lay-edited journal of opinion and it gives a good idea of the eminence of its contributors.

That is one way of grasping what Commonweal will provide for you in its present form. Another is to consider the distinguished list of columnists the magazine has lined up for the coming year: Harvey Cox, author of *The Secular City*: Michael Novak of Stanford, author of *The Open Church*; James O'Gara; Daniel Callahan; Robert McAfee Brown, author of *The Spirit of Protestantism*; John Leo; William V. Shannon, author of *The American Irish*, on the domestic political scene; William Pfaff, co-author of *The New Politics*, on world affairs and American foreign policy.

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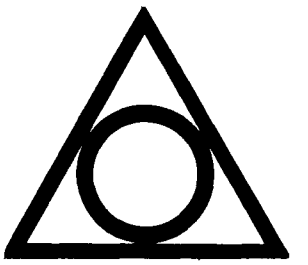
for the theory of God. First, it should be realized that although criticism of "proofs of God's existence" and of the proving attitude toward God-as-an-object has had a salutary effect upon vaunting claims to know God in a mystery-dispelling manner, it has not removed the philosophical requirement for some argument and inference to back up assertions about the divine reality. After all the personalist refinements have been introduced, a philosophically regulated inference must still be made in support of an affirmation of God's reality, if that affirmation is intended to arouse a similar conviction on the part of other men engaged in inquiring about God. In so far as the human search after God is something more than a domestic clarification of intended meaning on the part of theistic believers, the burden of supplying a sound inferential use of our common human experience must be accepted.



And secondly, theists who are presently adapting the pioneer research of Maréchal, D'Arcy, and Lonergan, cannot avoid the use of inference and the justification for such reasoning. To show that the experience of knowing implies an affirmation of the divine or that the experience of intending the divine is correlated with a distinctive growth in selfhood, general principles of analogy and causality must be used, and an argumentative study made of the theistic implications which human experience sustains. These two points can be combined in a recognition of the continued need for metaphysics, considered both as a direct inspection of our experience and as a disciplined effort at making controlled inferences supporting the truth of judgments about God's reality. And the mutual relations between the metaphysical theory of God and the philosophy of religion have to be explored in detail.

In sum, the presence of unresolved problems and conflicting interpretations will continue to characterize the theory of God as well as every part of philosophy. Every effort to minimize the problematic aspect, or to bypass it for purposes of education and edification, is bound to spoil the philosophical nature of the surviving theory of God. In contradistinction to all forms of theistic revivalism, a philosophic approach to God demands unremitting clarification of one's meaning of God, as well as unsparing criticism of one's interpretative inferences concerning the relation between human experience and the divine reality.

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BOOKS

Dope, spies, white slavery and perverse fun

La Maison de Rendez-vous

ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

Grove Press, $4.50

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

Some years ago, Tennessee Williams' "Camino Real" opened in New York, and the daily critics seemed so unnerved at being in the presence of a certified work of art that they forgot to mention that it was hilarious. Alain Robbe-Grillet often suffers a similar fate. So, before heading off in the direction of Sartre, Einstein, cinematic and novelistic technique, etc., it would be well to make a few simple observations. The book is often sexy; it is intriguing in a detective story and New Critical way; it is marvelously well-written and expertly translated.

I am thus quite sure that *La Maison de Rendez-vous* is perverse fun. I am only puzzled as to whether it is good.

At the center of the book (if it has any) there is the title establishment, Lady Ava's Blue Villa, a brothel which specializes in expensive tastes and sadistic *exhibitions*. In addition to prostitution and white slavery, the chief characters are also involved in dope traffic, double-agent espionage, and four of them (a Eurasian girl named Kim, an old man who imitates vampires, an American sometimes known as "Sir Ralph," and a black dog) may, or may not be, murderers. If there are any ungratuitous, objective happenings, they are the death of Edouard Manneret and the American's pursuit of a blonde who has just come into Lady Ava's employ.

But, then, any attempt to make a summary of a Robbe-Grillet plot ends in incoherence (what was *Last Year at Marienbad* "about"?) It is precisely his point that there be no distinction between past, present and future, and that reality be treated like theater, and vice-versa. That has been true ever since his first book, *Les Gommes*—although a vulgarization of Roland Barthes' criticism even now convinces some intelligent people that Robbe-Grillet is only concerned with the "surfaces" of things. When a dead man who has already been killed in several conflicting versions opens a door, the narrator coolly announces, "If Manneret has already just been murdered, this scene takes place earlier of course."

Sometimes a conversational narrator, an "I," is the source of *La Maison de Rendez-vous*, sometimes an impersonal third person simply describes, and at any given moment a character in an anecdote being told by a red-faced man may take on greater life than her raconteur. Before the book even begins, the first "author's note" tells us that the Hong Kong setting is in no way documentary. The second author's note petulantly challenges any reader rash enough to think "that the places described here below are not congruent with reality" to "return for another, closer look: things change fast in such climes."

I assume that the undergraduates of this modernist age can recite the conventional rationales for such an assault on objectivity. Ever since Flaubert there have been writers insisting that the complexities and complex perceptions of reality can only be rendered by abandoning that bourgeois orderliness of a linear time with a beginning, middle and end that presided over the birth of the novel. Faulkner, if memory serves, even wanted to print the different levels of consciousness in *The Sound and the Fury* in different colored type.

In short, Robbe-Grillet's method is, by current standards, unquestionably art and not caprice. But, to return to the original question, what good does this brilliant modernism serve in *La Maison de Rendez-vous*? In candor, I still am most fond of the first of Robbe-Grillet's books to be published, *Les Gommes*. It has the same mercurial vision of the world as his recent work—a detective seeking the murderer of a dead man who is not really dead kills the supposed victim. It may even have, as Bruce Morisette has brilliantly argued, a minutely worked out analogue to Oedipus, another hero who discovered that he was himself the assassin he was hunting. But more than that, there was in *Les Gommes* more of a sense of the tragic, human and moral meaning of all the co-incidences and discontinuities. There was a sadness. And I miss that simple element of old-fashioned feeling in *La Maison de Rendez-vous*.

For this new book strikes me as so many ingenious variations and a fugue on the themes of woman's flesh and sadistic criminality. Or, to take another metaphor, Robbe-Grillet here celebrates the marriage of Simenon and Pauline Reage, of Maigret and O. That is, to be sure, fascinating and fun but it fails in importance compared to what he has done and should do more profoundly again.

But, to close in a Robbe-Grilletian spirit, I insist on ending on an ambiguity. One winter night four years ago in Paris I heard a discussion on Robbe-Grillet led by Bruce Morisette and involving three brilliant, and quite convoluted, European intellectuals as panelists. All of the four positions stated from the dais were in sharp disagreement with each other. The subject of the debate was present and he was asked to say a concluding word. He simply agreed with each one of the antagonists at the same time. So, in urging the interested reader to get *La Maison de Rendez-vous*, I would only say of my reservations: Perhaps what I have said is not what I mean at all.

The Big Knockover

DASHIELL HAMMETT

Random House, $5.95

IRVING MALIN

Dashiell Hammett is usually praised for his clipped dialogue, violent action, and brutal characters. Certainly these ten stories merit such praise. "The Big Knockover," which is the best one, gives

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us an assortment of ugly, battle-scarred hoods. Big Flora, a massive woman, operates on one of her colleagues: "Her bare arms were blood to the elbows. Her face was damp with sweat. It was a gory mess, and it took time." She also shoots well—as do all the others. Their conversation is direct, limited, and abrupt because they are on the run toward money and away from the cops. Their motion is so persuasive that it puts us on edge; we cannot hold on to comfortable cliches about "law and order." We are thrown into chaos.

"The Big Knockover" is more successful than "The Gatewood Caper" or "The Scorched Face"—two of the stories included in this collection—because it is so *outrageous*. The hoods are very grotesque, the detective is very cunning; the ending is very suspenseful; the knockover is very big. The story is, indeed, so fantastic and stylized that it partially resembles the "romances" of Hawthorne. "Miracles" happen. Objects move of their own free will; they possess strange energy: "Red O'Leary's right hand rested on the table. It went up to Vance's mouth. The hand was a fist when it got there." Hallways become larger: "I hadn't known that Larrouy's was large enough to have two miles of hallway." Death itself jumps suddenly: "Death wasn't a sixteenth of an inch behind his eyes." The imagistic insistence upon size, mystery, and vitality creates a "metaphysics" —the world itself is unpredictable and risky; it moves erratically. We must somehow tame or stop it—if only for a while. No wonder the detective exclaims: "What a life!"

Perhaps the clue to the "big knockover"—the metaphor of life itself?—lies in an ironic attitude. We must view these oppositions of real and ideal, life and death, order and disorder as dialectical; only the ironic awareness of dualities will save us. The detective-narrator—we are in his mind; we learn as he learns—continually makes wisecracks: "For the next six hours I was busier than a flea on a fat woman." At first we dismiss them as usual hard-boiled remarks, but they grow on us, especially when we realize that they reinforce an entirely "funny" world. Like the detective who is finally outwitted by the arch-criminal—it is not Big Flora after all!—we admire the playfulness of existence. We are *converted*. I don't want to transform Hammett into a "religious humorist"—Thomas Mann's penetrating description of Kafka—but I do think that this side of him should be explored; such exploration may be more rewarding than cliches about violence.

Although "The Big Knockover" is very good, it does not attain the grandeur of *The Maltese Falcon*. In the novel Hammett employs the same unsettling ceremonies, but he uses them in more complex ways. The attempt to execute the "big knockover"—or, as it turns out, to be executed by it—is an interesting metaphor; it is, nevertheless, lower than the quest for the falcon. The black bird, like Poe's raven or Melville's whale, becomes bigger and bigger until it assumes cosmic proportions; it functions as the deity of an inverted, deceptive world. Of course, Hammett could not completely achieve this metaphysical dimension every time, but the very fact that "The Big Knockover" makes us think of *The Maltese Falcon* demonstrates its quality. Not only does this "new" story startle and entertain us—it instructs us about Hammett, America, and universal laws. It demands our admiration.

The Wilberforces and Henry Manning

DAVID NEWSOME

Belknap Press, $12

MAISIE WARD

What a fascinating period is the first half of the nineteenth century. In the religious field especially it abounds in "characters"—in one small group half a dozen may be found each of which could make a novelist's future. David Newsome has chosen well: Samuel Wilberforce, the Liberator of all slaves under the British flag, had a family almost as interesting as himself—and two of his sons married two of the four famous beautiful Miss Sargents, Henry Edward Manning marrying the third and George Ryder the fourth. Henceforward all these thought of themselves as one family, and the intensity of their feelings through the period of the Oxford Movement is matched in them all by an astonishing power of self-expression.

It was strange enough that they became involved in it at all for William Wilberforce was the leader of what was known as the Clapham Sect—a group of extreme Evangelicals, and was himself a Cambridge man. But his eldest son, another William, had disgraced himself at Cambridge. "Alas poor Wm. sad work" wrote his father concerning "the *grand* grief and shame . . . conviviality on a Sunday eve . . . so drunk as to be beastly in a piously disposed friend's room . . ." So to Oxford the younger sons were sent, and all three "passed through . . . the fiery trial of an university . . . without injury."

Because it was a college famous for reading, Oriel was chosen though it was the heart of the High Church party. William Wilberforce was by no means the sort of bigot the Clapham Sect sometimes begot. As long as they remained Christians it did not greatly concern him that his sons should be High Church, and, after William junior had dissipated the family fortunes, the father spent his old age quite happily in the homes of his other sons.

One would like a little more background both to this attractive man and to the whole story. It is so very strange that Wilberforce, fighting for the freedom of the Negro, should appear so blind to the wage slavery in factories, the wholesale robbery by enclosure of the countryside then going on in England. Samuel, later Bishop of Oxford and the least attractive of his sons, during a riot of starving laborers "buried the family plate in his garden and mounted guard over the deeds." William Wilberforce himself was fantastically charitable: a close friend of his gave away, while single, seven-eighths of his income and the biographer estimates *at least* as high a figure in Wilberforce's case.

After marriage his house was filled with incompetent and aged men and women designated servants who were waited on by yet others, to the harassment of unassisted visitors. Yet with all his compassion he believed "God-given" a social structure that rich men were *at that very time* altering to their own ad-

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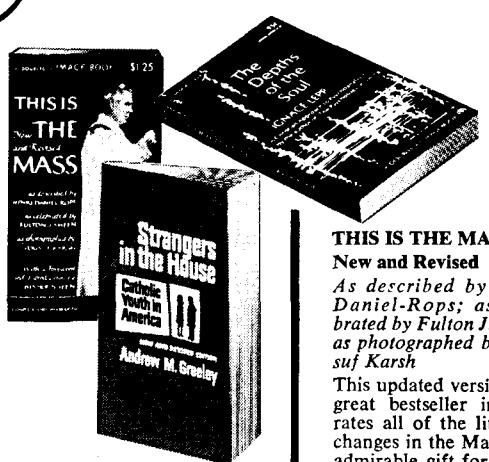
vantage—destroying an independent yeomanry and creating a pool of starvation-driven mechanics. It was the ambitious Benjamin Disraeli, not the devoted William Wilberforce, who was picturing with astonishing intensity the England he called "two nations."

Out of the group of young men, all destined for the Church, all brought up with the highest ideals conceivable of self-sacrifice and self-devotion, Manning appears to be the only one really alive to the social question. No one book can do everything, but I certainly wish we were told a little more about his attitude as parish priest. His "charge" as an Archdeacon "was almost entirely given over to social questions" (parochial responsibility for the poor, iniquity of child labor). His is perhaps the most sympathetic portrait drawn here especially in his personal life. All the beautiful Sargent girls were delicate—probably tuberculous—and Manning's married life lasted only four years. But, as an aged Cardinal fifty-five years later, he said on his death bed to Herbert Vaughan "Into this little book my dearest Wife wrote her prayers and meditations. Not a day has passed since her death on which I have not prayed and meditated from this book. All the good I may have done, all the good I may have been I owe to her. Take precious care of it."

Henry Manning and Samuel Wilberforce, marrying sisters, both losing them, were close together in their affections—and each after his loss noted in his diary a fear of the same dangerous quality in himself: ambition. They had every opportunity of achieving high office in the Church—Manning and two Wilberforces were early made Archdeacons, to the intense delight of their mother-in-law. The only barrier was the scapegrace William, and after he had been convicted of bribery in a parliamentary election Samuel tried to get him "safely tucked away in some comfortable berth such as a Governorship in the Ionian Islands." (That Samuel should really have tried for this speaks some of the volumes needed as background to this family picture.)

But what *is* conveyed most interestingly is the enormous ambitions the whole group had for what might be done by a revitalized Church of England: education should be the Church's work right up to university level. *There must be* in the colonial world established independent hierarchies. "The Bishop of *Australia* is Bishop of *nothing*. He has no see" Manning wrote. "He ought to be Bishop of Sidney with metropolitical rights over the whole." The powers of Parliament over the Church must be abolished: and it is painful to note how furiously they opposed such excellent recommendations as a better apportioning of Church funds between richer and poorer areas—because made by a parliament now containing dissenters and Jews as well as Churchmen. "The omnipotence of Parliament" wrote Manning "is a gross, secular, worldly, infidel boast . . . To *administer* e.g. division and revenue of bishoprics etc.—is rightfully the authority of the Church alone." And Samuel Wilberforce who delighted in violent expressions called the Whig party "a set of as shabby, word-eating, pocket-picking, halter-earning, sacrilegious villains as ever poisoned



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When the chance came of really high preferment Samuel accepted it untroubled by doubt or difficulty, while Manning whose faith in the Church of England was wavering felt obliged to refuse it. The path is traced of all this group—the headlong merry Henry Wilberforce, the profounder Robert, Ryder, Manning—and well-chosen letters show their relationships with Gladstone (for many years Manning's most intimate friend), and above all with Newman.

I would take issue with Mr. Newsome in one statement often repeated. With all except Manning he finds, as the cause of their change in religion, hearts that were too strong for their heads. Even Newman's words about the "fatal error" of a world which can "think itself a judge of Religious Truth without preparation of heart" seem to him to indicate something of the same weakness. Yet surely another phrase he quotes makes clear enough what Newman was saying: "to be in earnest in seeking the truth is an indispensable requisite for finding it." Newman is always disparaging mere logic-chopping. Today we are less inclined to separate a man into his component parts, more ready to see the whole person thinking, loving, acting. And in this book we have a singularly engaging picture of a group perpetually interacting with their sufferings, affections, triumphs and tragedies.

Death of the Hind Legs

JOHN WAIN

Viking, $4.50

T. O'HARA

How seriously can we take John Wain? Since his early, forced inclusion in the Angry gaggle to his present virtuosity evidenced by Shakespeare criticism, autobiography, novels both petulant and mature, essays on America, poetry: lyrical and ersatz epic, reviews that show a factual backlog usually the product of older minds, and his sporadic short stories, his stance has reflected the tonal ambivalence of a confirmed literary prankster.

In this collection of eleven stories once in a while an emotion is exposed legitimately and with an intensity and precision that cuts, but too often a flatulence and gross sentimentality perdures, reminiscent of the Monday through Friday scenarios that keep housewives from getting familiar with reality. What, then, is he trying to pull? A writer's awareness of his varied poses of condescension can normally be detected. Think of *Dubliners* whose readers know that Joyce is thoroughly in control of the superior laughter directed at the gyrations of his bumptious Irishmen. But Wain isn't writing irony and he's not a parodist. There are too many embarrassments to allow the happy conclusion that the fictional affairs are under the command of a gifted and sly general.

In "A Visit at Tea-time," for instance, we expect from the regressive yearnings of a man confronting his boyhood house and garden something more than the old replay about you can't go home again threaded with a few castrative and narcissistic strands. And isn't it painfully clear that a story hinging on such a tenuous plot as girl-stands-before-mailbox-to-retrieve-vile-letter-to-lover needs a treatment far removed from a *Redbook* discussion by the mailman and the girl on the machinations of love?

"Goodnight, Old Daisy" follows an old man in his Lear period to a museum where the train he once operated is stored. His thoughts tells us of the symbolic identification so essential to his soul and of the good, distant days when he and Daisy ripped through the world. His death at the end offers no relevant comment on the nature and meaning of his existence. The tragic fatuity of his mechanical obsession is hinted at but loses its imaginative strength under the ordinary prose.

"Giles and Penelope" deals with a dejected mistress and her recognition that she and the Common Prostitute aren't far apart in their modes of being. The final scene shows her turning to her drunken man during the moment of hebephrenic self-discovery and asking "is the truth *always* funny?" Again, in "Down Our Way," the content covers well-traveled ground. The issue is

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racial prejudice and the characters are so secure in their categorical pillories that reading about them is like viewing one of the anemic performances one finds on those homiletic playlets on Sunday afternoon television. And so it goes for the most part; even the title piece is nothing more than a weak embellishment of the show must go on theme coupled with some asides on pantomime and Life.

There are exceptions. "Darkness" tells of a frightened man's archetypal journey through the blackness of a Spanish village and blends comedy and fear in a way that is above Wain's other maneuvering of technique, and "King Claiban," the opening story, details the destruction of a simple and loving wrestler whose muscular innocence is manipulated by his venal wife and brother. These don't compensate, however, for the rest. The recurrence of defeated men and women, the desolution motifs, the dislocated relationships and the cultural and institutional collapses point out Wain's ambition. It is to explore that force that through the green fuse drives. Regrettably he failed to achieve it.

A Guide to Catholic Reading

JACK F. BERNARD &
JOHN J. DELANEY
Doubleday, $5.95

THOMAS P. MCDONNELL

A Guide to Catholic Reading deserves an immediate superlative: it certainly must rank as one of the most unsatisfactory reference books of the year—and a reference book, of course, is nothing if not good for at least a year or more. This may not be so damning and pre-emptive as it sounds, because a reference based almost wholly on arbitrary selection has as much chance for universal satisfaction as, say, the average anthology of poems.

But even at its best, *A Guide to Catholic Reading* provides a fairly presentable job of reference—for something like a decade ago. It is, of course, inevitably uneven in its parts. Some are better (and, inversely, worse) than others: items in the section on "The Arts" are duplicated in other sections; and the omission, for

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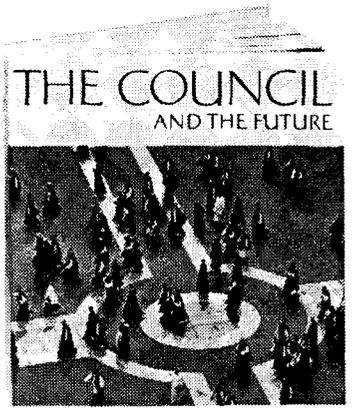

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example, of William Congdon's "In My Disc of Gold" anywhere in the book is quite inexcusable; the section on "The Bible" is one of the better parts, though it includes no reference to the excellent Westminster version of the New Testament, edited some eighteen years ago by Cuthbert Lattey, S. J.; Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man*, perhaps, belongs more properly in "Science" than in "Philosophy," and so on. A minor and disputatious point, but Catholic commentary on Teilhard has too much ignored his role as a scientist.

On the advantage side of *Guide*, you do not have to qualify as a modern Renaissance man to see that the sections on "The Church in the Modern World" and "History" are pretty good jobs of work. In fact, *Guide* may be considered fairly useful in categories that are basically referential by nature It is chiefly where the "critical" sensibility attempts to encounter the artifacts of free creativity, however, that *Guide's* almost complete deficiency becomes appallingly clear.

These sections are: "The Arts," "Fiction," and "Literature," with subdivisions in "Poetry" and "Drama." How it is possible to exclude, say, Bernard Berenson from "The Arts" is quite beyond the fathoming of this reviewer; hence, one's respect for *Guide* goes down a critical degree. "Fiction," too, is a hardly less perplexing guide to the contemporary novel and short story. There is entry room and commentary for William Barrett's *The Lilies of the Field*, Myles Connolly's *Mr. Blue*, A. J. Cronin's *The Keys of the Kingdom*, Louis De Wohl's *The Quiet Light* and *The Spear*, Henry Morton Robinson's *The Cardinal*, with a half dozen other innocuous selections, including Michael Kent's *The Mass of Brother Michel*, Ethel Mannin's *Late Have I Loved Thee*, and Bruce Marshall's etcetera, while Di Lampedusa, Crawford Power, and Aubrey Menen go unmentioned.

It is not that we necessarily argue for the exclusion of these titles—though there is basis for argument on this point, too—but it is literally unaccountable that Katherine Anne Porter, John Howard Griffin, Caroline Gordon, Walker Percy, David Lodge, Heinrich Boll, Anthony Burgess, Julien Green, Jack Kerouac, to say nothing of the possible rehabilitation of James T. Farrell and the not totally unchristian orientation of, say, Joyce, O'Neill, Scott Fitzgerald, and Hemingway—it is unaccountable, I say, that these should be excluded at the expense of the mediocrity to which *Guide* has committed its curious points of reference.

It is no surprise, therefore, that some of the commentary is questionable as well, even on a perfectly acceptable entry. The entry on Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, for example, says: "This is probably the most widely read of the great English novelist's books." But surely, both critically and statistically, *The Loved One* is far more widely read today—and it is as thoroughly a Christian work of art as *Brideshead* has been over-claimed to be by Catholic college faculties. And this: "The book is highly recommended to adults as the best work of one of the best contemporary authors." Aside from the sophomoric "recommended to adults" disclaimer, it is highly disputable that *Brideshead*, categorically, is Waugh's best novel; and any compilers of reference who say so, without qualification, simply do not know what they are talking about. Hence, one's respect for *Guide* drops a few more crucial degrees. With this said, it is perhaps the better part of both prudence and charity not to go into the category of the "Short Story" at all.

But something has to be said about *Guide*'s fatuous abdication of the barest critical intent in the section on "Poetry." The entry on Dante (in "Literature"), by the way, is stilted in its Middle Ages complex and deficient in its cursory citation of but two of the various translations available today. In making the great leap forward, Daniel Berrigan, S. J. is represented with his first and possibly weakest volume, *Time Without Number*, while the commentary notes that he "writes in blank verse," which, of course, he does not. Roy Campbell, an admittedly neglected poet of our time, is represented with *Talking Bronco*, but why not with Regnery's two volumes of the *Collected Poems*? The compilers of *Guide* say, in effect, that there are no qualifiable Catholic poets around (and what, by defini-

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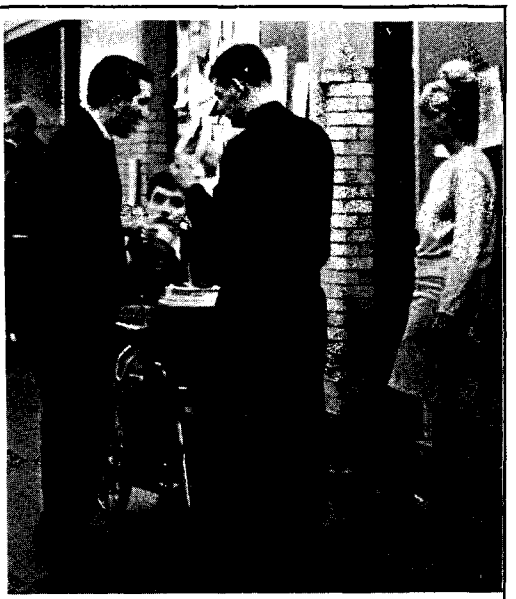

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tion, is a Catholic poet?), but Joyce Kilmer is in and Edith Sitwell is out, Phyllis McGinley is in and Brother Antoninus is out, Alfred Noyes is in and David Jones is out (too obscure, one presumes), Francis Thompson is in and Robert Fitzgerald, John Logan, Philip Lamantia, Claire McAllister, Edward Hardy, and R. E. F. Larrson are out, and so on. Hence, in this section, one's respect for *Guide*'s competence deflates altogether.

On to the section on "Drama" and, though not an official entry, so to speak, some side remarks on literary criticism. T. S. Eliot, thankfully, makes it in the "Drama" section with "Murder in the Cathedral," but it is curious to note that he didn't make it in "Poetry." Perhaps curiouser than that, as Alice would say, William Alfred's "Hogan's Goat" and the plays of Brendan Behan (too naughty to be Catholic?) are not represented as either approved or disapproved dramatic material. On criticism, an over-extended tribute to Harold C. Gardiner, S. J. is understandably generous but ill-suited to any appreciation of the nature and function of literary criticism itself. It is questionable enough to recommend *Norms for the Novel* as resolving the "apparent contradiction between 'bad books' and 'good writing,'" but to refer to Father Gardiner as "the foremost American literary critic of our time" is both cruel and delusive nonsense.

For where, one must ask, does this leave such Jesuit critics as Walter J. Ong and William F. Lynch and Anthony Padovano? And only if one takes the term "literary critic" in the most restrictive sense—so explosive in all directions is the literary/cultural scene nowadays—can we possibly exclude the brilliant, though sometimes erratic, work of Marshall McLuhan. David Lodge of England is also a fine critic (*Language of Fiction*) as well as a novelist of more than usual talent. And has *Guide* set up such restrictive lines of technical demarcation that it must necessarily exclude the empathetic work of critics like Allen Tate and W. H. Auden and W. K. Wimsatt? And poets like Robert Lowell and Edwin Muir and Richard Eberhart?

This, I think, brings into serious question the competence of *A Guide to Cath-*

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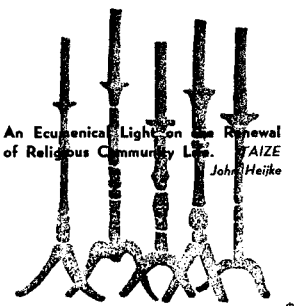

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John Heijke studied theology at the universities of Louvain and Nijmegen and is professor at the Theological Institute of Eindhoven, Netherlands. The author of *St. Augustine's Comments on "Imago Dei"* and *The Bible on Faith*, for the past eight years he has been making a study of religious communities. In 1963 he was a guest lecturer at Duquesne University.

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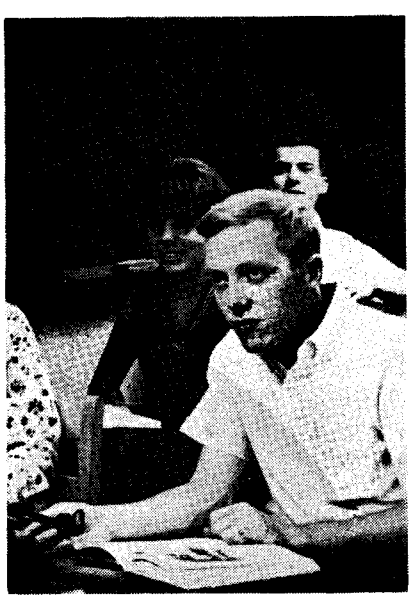

olic Reading to deal at all with the creative arts in poetry, drama, fiction, and criticism. If it is folly of omission enough that *Guide* (in fairly objective categories) should have missed such choice references as Denis De Rougemont, Mircea Eliade, F. Sherwood Taylor, and the *Cross Currents* book on "Psychiatry and Catholic Morality," then one can hardly reserve much hope for an even more discerning spectrum in the creative arts. More than this, however, it is simply untenable—if not intolerable—to force upon literature a categorically "Catholic" view that is itself something less than Christian in its capacity to encounter the human experience at large.

In sum, then, Doubleday's *A Guide to Catholic Reading* is already just enough out-dated (and old-fashioned) to qualify, at best, as a partially useful work of reference.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 498)

anti-Johnsonites, intellectuals and decent persons, who voted for all three of the candidates. The moral and intellectual melodramatization of that election is either childish, which Goodman isn't, or just plain arbitrary and silly, which Goodman is.

2) "In any case," Mr. Goodman goes on, "Lindsay's positions *have* (his italics) been sophisticated conservatism: strengthening the U.N., admitting China, raising the minimum wage, strong civil rights, etc." (his etc.). The old game—I gave it up in my 25th year, up until which I was given to showing what was the *"truly* liberal" (my emphasis) position on this that or the other problem. It is really a waste of time to take a label like conservative or liberal, conventionally used, and assert that it is really falsely applied. There are circumstances under which such a thing is profitable, for instance when undertaking to give the etymology of a word, at which point it can be relevant to express regret at the direction the word went, and the resulting intellectual confusions. But Mr. Goodman, always asseverative, doesn't even take the time to argue a word's misuse. A "true" conservative is for strengthening the U.N. because to do so is, says G, to speak "for world stability." But—don't you see?—the conservatives' opposition to the strengthening of the U.N. is based on their reasoning that to do such a thing is *not* in fact to increase world stability, an example of which is that we are now being called upon, by the U.N., to wage a holy war to liberate Rhodesia from Ian Smith. The result of it all is that Mr. Goodman is challenging common assumptions about what is the conservative position as distinguished from the liberal position for no reason more discernible than that he finds it instructive or entertaining to do so. But for those who do not want to have to readjust all their categories in order to grope their way through a single review of Mr. Goodman, the effort is not worth while unless indeed Mr. Goodman is fiercely entertaining, which alas he isn't.

3) And again: "On the contrary, so-called 'conservatives' like Goldwater and Buckley are wild laissez-faire radicals, unbridled technologists, punitive legalists, and international adventurers." Translated, this means that it is wildly laissez-faire to opt presumptively (see pp. 171-3 in my book, theoretically the subject of G's review) for the free market over against the administrative price level (e.g., for free market on rent rather than rent control); "unbridled" to recognize the advent of the industrial revolution; "punitive" to expect that wrongdoers will be isolated; adventuristic to argue in favor of international and regional alliances aimed at containing manifestly incontinent territorial powers.

Mr. Goodman carries his tedious solipsisms to the point of eccentricity. "My cynical opinion is that 100% of the police opposition to the [Civilian Review] Board was that it would eventually become a channel for complaint by irate graft-givers." Well, my uncynical opinion, is that this might have accounted for a percentage, size unpredictable, of the opposition; but no closer to 100% than Mr. Lindsay's capture of 100% of the vote of decent people. ". . . [Buckley] sometimes sees the obvious (which is already a rare

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thing), but he never thinks philosophically. Therefore his campaign was not educational." Let us assume I did not think philosophically, it being understood that that means I did not think as Mr. Goodman thinks—even then, what do you make of the residual inanity? The ants do not think philosophically, but their activity is educational, or at least Thoreau thought so (which reminds me, was he a conservative or a liberal?). "The Provos [in Amsterdam] are long-haired spirited radical youth of the type that Bill Buckley likes to call mincing, unidealistic, and too cowardly to drop napalm-bombs on children." The reduction of the Vietnam involvement to the level of are-you-in-favor-of-dropping-napalm-bombs-on-children is characteristic of the intellectual lassitude of Mr. Goodman on this lamentable occasion, to whom one can be grateful only that the instinctive austerity of his literary style spared us "young children."

I take the pains to make these random observations because I do believe that Mr. Goodman is occasionally interesting. And I stop short of explaining what my masterwork was really all about as an exhibition of the self-restraint I am willing to show in my corrections of Mr. Goodman.

WM. F. BUCKLEY, JR.

Goodman on Buckley

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I doubt that WFB was so bored as all that—till afterwards. Anyway, his book *is* (comparatively) long, much longer than my books.

What free market? Laissez-faire has come to mean the baronial domination of semi-monopolists and monopolists.

PAUL GOODMAN

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REVIEWERS

MICHAEL HARRINGTON is the author of *The Accidental Century* (Macmillan).

IRVING MALIN is the author of *New American Gothic*.

MAISIE WARD is the well-known author of, most recently, *The Letters of Caryll Houselander*.

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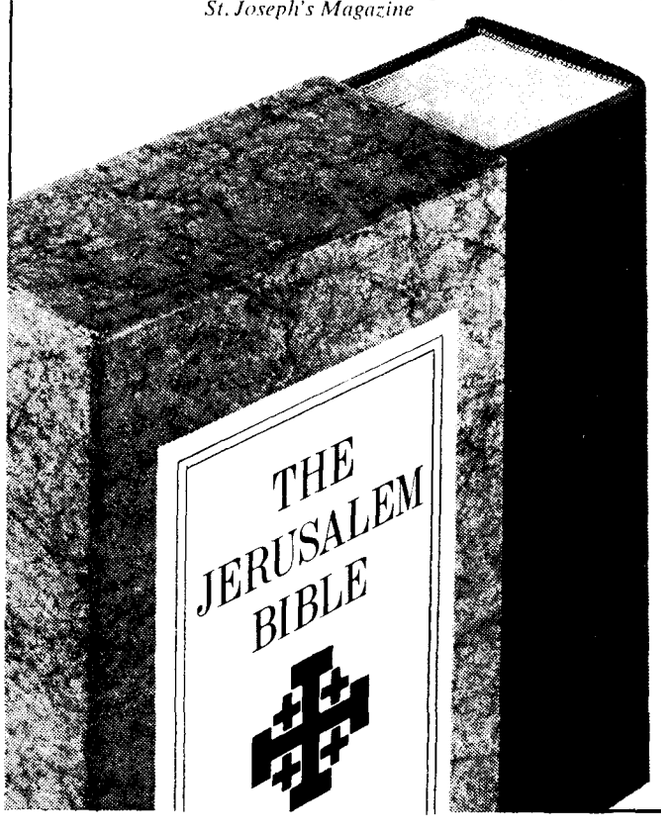

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